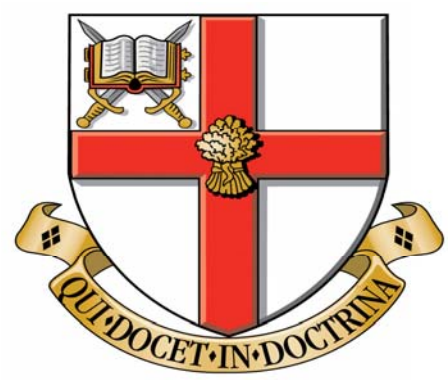

University of Chester

The Uninvited Guests:

Britain's Military Forces in Iceland, 1940-1942

Philip W. Deans

Department of

History and Archaeology

University of Chester

This dissertation was submitted to the University of Chester on 11 October 2012 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Military History.

Written and submitted for examination at the University of Chester during 2012

Abstract

Throughout 10 May 1940-22 April 1942, British forces conducted a military occupation of Iceland. There were two initial reasons for this venture: firstly, in order to acquire air and naval bases to combat German forces situated along the Norwegian coast; and secondly, in order to prevent the island from coming under German control, thus guarding against encirclement. Whitehall certainly considered it an advantageous undertaking. However, as this dissertation shall show, such beliefs were swiftly escalated. During June 1940, after France's capitulation, the retention and defence of Iceland became all the more important. It was essential, for example, that Britain could maintain at least one clear access route in and out the North Atlantic. Failure to do so would surely have lead to her starvation and/or military defeat. As a result, and along with other important reasons discussed herein, over 20,000 British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force personnel, supported at various points by American and Canadian troops, were eventually stationed there.

Unfortunately, there are very few publications on the British invasion and occupation of Iceland, notwithstanding a few specialist works. Those works that do exist, however, read more like chronological narratives, rather than analytical studies. Consequently, there exists some exciting opportunities for the historiography's expansion, not just in size, but also in nature of content. This dissertation, entitled 'The Uninvited Guests: Britain's Military Forces in Iceland, 1940-1942', contributes to that much needed expansion.

This dissertation looks at the British occupation of Iceland over two periods: the invasion period, 10-19 May 1940, and the occupation period, 20 May 1940-22 April 1942. It assesses the effects and consequences of both the invasion and occupation, and tries to determine how far they preserved Icelandic freedoms and secured Allied interests in Northern Europe. Indeed, this dissertation shows that the invasion and initial occupation of Iceland was a complete military disaster, one that offered no benefit to either the Icelanders or Allies. If

anything, it put the Icelanders at greater risk of harm from German retaliation. This dissertation also shows that Britain made good its early deficiencies by eventually bringing security and prosperity to Iceland, where before there had been none, and by positively utilising Iceland in the war against Germany. The conclusions of this dissertation are fascinating; they show that it is possible to cultivate rich reward from an operation that could have been destined for complete disaster.

Acknowledgments

I have found preparing for and writing this dissertation to be an extremely stimulating experience. Its existence today as a finished product, however, comes not without assistance gratefully received from numerous experts, family members and friends. Firstly, I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr Keith McLay. Dr McLay has done more for me than can be put into words here. Without his support, understanding and historical knowledge, I know that completion of this dissertation, indeed the entire degree programme, would have been far more challenging. Keith, thank you very much. Secondly, but no less importantly, I wish to thank my family: Mum, Dad, Douglas and Owen. Mum, for her company and assistance at The National Archives; Dad and Douglas (and Mum once again), for their patience whilst proof reading even the most challenging of passages; and Owen, for providing, at times, a much needed distraction from writing. Needless to say, I love you all very much and greatly appreciate your undying belief in me and your support. Thirdly, I wish to thank Dr Bob Bushaway, for providing me with an insight into British Army deployment and officer training before and during the Second World War, and Prof Þór Whitehead, for advising me on secondary sources. My thanks, gentlemen, go to you both. Fourthly and finally, but by no means least, I wish to thank my seven closest friends throughout this period: Clare, Duncan, Grainne, Maria, Mike, Ruth and Stuart. Each has, in their individual ways, provided me with unrelenting support throughout the past twelve months, always offering time and ears when these were most needed. Cheers guys, much appreciated!

Declaration

This dissertation has, at no point, been accepted in substance for any other degree. It is entirely of my own work except where otherwise stated. All paraphrases, quotes and diagrams are substantiated by references. A bibliography is also appended. I understand that deviation from these guarantees will amount to academic malpractice which, if identified, can result in deduction of marks or disqualification.

Signed …… (candidate)

Date ……

To Woo

Grandmother, Teacher, Friend

Contents

Notes to Reader

Icelandic contains some additional letters not seen within English. These are Áá, Ðð, Éé, Íí, Óó, Úú, Ýý, Þþ, Ææ and Öö.[1] Gunnar Karlsson describes their various uses:

> The letters *á*, *é*, *ó*, and *æ* denoted long vowels in the medieval language, but now stand for diphthongs [...]. The difference between *i* and *í*, *u* and *ú*, was also one of length in the old language, but now they have different values: *i* is like *i* in 'pin', *í* like *ee* in 'see; *ú* is similar to English *u* in 'loom' and 'woumb', whilst *u* has no close equivalents in English. In modern Icelandic *y* and *ý* have the same values as *i* and *í*. *Ö* sounds similar to *u* in 'but'. *Ð* and *þ* denote a fricative: *ð* is the voiced variant, like *th* in 'brother' and 'weather', and *þ* the unvoiced one like *th* in 'thin'.[2]

An alphabet incorporating Icelandic letters should appear as follows: Aa/Áá, Bb, Cc, Dd, Ðð, Ee/Éé, Ff, Gg, Hh, Ii/Íí, Jj, Kk, Ll, Mm, Nn, Oo/Óó, Pp, Qq, Rr Ss, Tt, Uu/Úú, Vv, Ww, Xx, Yy/Ýý, Zz, Þþ, Ææ and Öö.[3]

This dissertation was originally submitted for examination at the University of Chester on 11 October 2012. Any grammatical or typographical errors discovered since then have been omitted or rectified. These changes fail to affect the document's look, feel or text in any substantial way.

[1] Gunnar Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years: The History of a Marginal Society* (London: Hurst, 2000), p. xiii.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

Abbreviations

ADM = Admiralty

AIR = Air Ministry

BBC = British Broadcasting Corporation

BEF = British Expeditionary Force

c. = circa

col. = column

CAB = Cabinet Papers

Co. = Company

DLI = Durham Light Infantry

DPhil/PhD = Doctor of Philosophy

Dr. = Doctor

ed. = editor

eds. = editors

FO = Foreign Office

Govt. = Government

HMS = His/Her Majesty's Ship

HMSO = His/Her Majesty's Stationary Office

Ibid. = *Ibidem*

i.e. = id est

MP = Member of Parliament

NATO = North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

No. = Number

p. = page

pp. = pages

para. = paragraph

pdr. = pounder

RUSI = Royal United Services Institute

s.v. = sub verbo

UoI = University of Iceland

US = United States

vol. = volume (*Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*)

WO = War Office

WW2 = World War Two

2RM = 2nd Royal Marine Battalion

* = volume (books)

Introduction

Iceland is an isolated seafaring nation situated in the North Atlantic (see figures one and two).[1] It has a single landmass totalling some 40,000 square miles – more than twice Denmark's size – which all but touches the Arctic Circle.[2] Along with Newfoundland, Greenland and the Faroe archipelago, Iceland constitutes one of four highly strategic steppingstones, indeed weapon platforms, between Northern Europe and North America.[3] 'Whoever possesses Iceland',[4] writes Winston S. Churchill, 'holds a pistol firmly pointed at England, America and Canada.'[5] Two similar theories, both formulated during the Second World War, 1939-1945, are also publicised by Leslie Roberts and George Fielding Eliot.[6]

With reference to landscape, Iceland bears a limited resemblance towards its many and varied European neighbours.[7] Substantiating this point, Eric Linklater writes:

> He must deprive Ireland of nearly all its roads; elevate the larger part […] to several thousand feet, and cover it with an ice-cap; complicate it with extinct or quiescent volcanoes and hot springs; girdle it with swamps and lava fields and furious winds; and give it a population of largely built and sturdy men, of handsome young women.[8]

---

[1] G. Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years: The History of a Marginal Society* (London: Hurst and Co., 2000), p. 9.

[2] *Ibid*.; W. R. Mead, 'Renaissance of Iceland', *Economic Geography*, 21 (1945), p. 136; and E. Linklater, *The Northern Garrisons* (London: HMSO, 1941), p. 18.

[3] W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War* (London: Pimlico, 2002), p. 401.

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] *Ibid*.

[6] G. L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 1; L. Roberts, 'They Never Had Seen a Soldier', *The Saturday Earning Post*, 213 (1940), p. 20; and G. F. Eliot, 'If an Allied Defeat, What?', *Life*, 8 (1940), p. 29.

[7] G. Hálfdanarson, *Historical Dictionary of Iceland* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2008), p. vii.

[8] Linklater, *The Northern Garrisons*, p. 34.

Little vegetation, including grass, grows.[9] Rock fragments and dust lie scattered and abundant.[10] No fossil fuels exist.[11] An unfavourable climate and prolonged winter restricts agricultural production.[12] 'Fully four-fifths of'[13] Iceland's interior, writes William Charles Chamberlin, 'is not suited to human habitation'.[14] For these reasons, many first time visitors have, on arrival, developed fairly critical preliminary reactions.[15] Substantiating this point, David Rissik writes:

> The first impressions of a newcomer to Iceland are not exactly favourable. The complete absence of trees and hedgerows gives it a forbidding appearance and long stretches of rocks, stones and lava dust, devoid of even the scantiest vegetation, lend added force to a general impression of austerity.[16]

Throughout c. 750-c. 800, the inhabitants of Scandinavia made significant advancements in their technological abilities and, due to this achievement, wider transactions.[17] They constructed oceangoing vessels, using them to traverse the North

[9] M. C. Bilder and J. G. Bilder, *A Foot Soldier for Patton: The Story of a 'Red Diamond' Infantryman with the US Third Army* (Drexel: Casemate, 2008), p. 43 and Roberts, 'They Never Had Seen a Soldier', *The Saturday Evening Post*, p. 89.

[10] W. C. Chamberlin, *Economic Development of Iceland through World War II* (New York: AMS Press, 1968), p. 8.

[11] Mead, 'Renaissance of Iceland', *Economic Geography*, p. 136.

[12] Hálfdanarson, *Historical Dictionary of Iceland*, s.v. AGRICUTURE. For a brief but insightful War Office appraisal of Iceland's climate, see The National Archives, WO 106/3034, 'Alabaster: Plan and First Maintenance Project', 11 May 1940, Appendix B.

[13] Chamberlin, *Economic Development of Iceland through World War II*, p. 8.

[14] *Ibid*., p. 9.

[15] P. A. Coggin, *The British Occupation of Iceland* (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, c. 2009), p. 10.

[16] D. Rissik, *The DLI at War: The History of the Durham Light Infantry, 1939-1945* (Brancepeth: The Durham Light Infantry, c. 1954), p. 77.

[17] Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, pp. 9-10.

Atlantic and make contact with the British Isles, France and Russia.[18] Such exploration also resulted in the discovery and colonisation of Iceland.[19] Whilst not confirmed for certain, it has been widely suggested, following various scientific investigations, that this event occurred during and/or after c. 870.[20] 'Wherever Norsemen settled',[21] writes Gunnar Karlsson, 'they established a regular assembly [...] of all free males.'[22] In Iceland, this primitive form of legislature, known as the Alþingi (hereafter anglicised as Althing) was established during c. 930, a time when population numbers ranged between 20,000 and 105,000.[23] Thenceforth, over 300 years of independent governance, a period known as Iceland's Golden Age, proceeded.[24]

During 1262, King Hákon Hákonarson, ruler of Norway, expanded his empire by annexing Iceland.[25] There exists numerous suggestions as to why the general populace freely surrendered much of their autonomy to him; reasons for this decision remain a perennial enigma.[26] Those arguments put forward, however, are all entirely credible: a tiredness of inter-tribal warfare, a lack of executive regulation, and a fear of complete isolation.[27] Norwegian rule, it should be understood, did not last long.[28] After countless years of war and

[18] Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, pp. 9-10.

[19] *Ibid*., p. 11.

[20] *Ibid*., pp. 13-14.

[21] *Ibid*., p. 20.

[22] *Ibid*.

[23] *Ibid*. and S. Thorarinsson, 'Population Changes in Iceland', *Geographical Review*, 51 (1961), p. 519. This date also marks the end of the settlement period.

[24] B. Gröndal, *Iceland: From Neutrality to NATO Membership* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1971), p. 13.

[25] Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, p. 83.

[26] *Ibid*., p. 84.

[27] *Ibid*.; Chamberlin, *Economic Development of Iceland through World War II*, p. 10; and Gröndal, *Iceland*, p. 13.

[28] Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, p. 102.

intermarriage, Norway became inherited by King Olav Håkonsson, ruler of Denmark (see figure three).[29] This event, during 1380, forged these two nations into a union, one that would last until 1814.[30] Iceland, on the other hand, had no choice but to accept subjugation under the Danish Crown, with control not officially relinquished until 1944.[31]

The Icelandic people, rooted from warrior races, have not always been unfamiliar with, or completely opposed to arms and armour.[32] When weaponry was readily available, marauding undesirables could expect strong resistance from well organised and proficient defenders.[33] 'In 1431,'[34] writes Benedikt Gröndal, 'there was a massive battle between British privateers and Icelanders in the Skagafjörður district in which eighty pirates were killed.'[35] The case of Gunnarr Hámundarson, 'Iceland's most celebrated archer',[36] writes William R. Short, also substantiates this point. Whilst defending his home, he singlehandedly 'killed or wounded […] ten attackers'.[37] Such ferocity, however, slowly subsided during and/or after c. 1500, the result of a lengthy disarmament programme instigated by several successive kings to quell civil conflict and lawlessness.[38] These initiatives were highly successful, fostering widespread aversion to military hardware.[39]

---

[29] Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, p. 102.

[30] Hálfdanarson, *Historical Dictionary of Iceland*, s.v. DENMARK and Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, p. 102.

[31] Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, p. 102.

[32] Gröndal, *Iceland*, p. 14.

[33] *Ibid*.

[34] *Ibid*.

[35] *Ibid*.

[36] W. R. Short, *Icelanders in the Viking Age: The People of the Sagas* (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 2010), p. 50.

[37] *Ibid*., p. 51.

[38] Gröndal, *Iceland*, p. 14 and Hálfdanarson, *Historical Dictionary of Iceland*, s.v. DEFENSE.

[39] Hálfdanarson, *Historical Dictionary of Iceland*, s.v. DEFENSE.

Without an effective deterrent, Iceland possessed no ability to defend itself and protect its interests.[40] Two examples of this dangerous situation, both taken from the second Anglo-Danish war, 1807-1814, demonstrate as much.[41] Firstly, during 1807, the Royal Navy impounded sixteen merchant ships, each laden with goods, which were headed for Iceland.[42] Had these vessels, following substantial lobbying by an influential Englishman called Sir Joseph Banks, not been released, the Icelanders would have suffered great economic hardship and malnutrition, if not complete famine.[43] Secondly, during 1809, Royal Navy warships, in their capacity as enemy belligerents, sailed to Iceland unchecked and unchallenged.[44] On arrival, Captain Francis John Knott, of HMS *Rover*, did not claim the island as a British territory, despite this idea being considered, because, writes Gröndal, it 'would have brought His Majesty more expense than profit'.[45] Whilst both these events, historically, were of no consequence, they illustrate how helpless Iceland had become, how totally at the mercy it was to more powerful nations.[46]

Throughout the First World War, 1914-1918, due to recurring communication difficulties with Denmark, the Icelanders obtained, albeit unofficially, their second taste of independent governance, something not experienced for more than 600 years.[47] This

[40] Gröndal, *Iceland*, p. 14.

[41] *Ibid*., p. 15 and A. C. O'Dell, *The Scandinavian World* (London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1957), p. 373.

[42] Gröndal, *Iceland*, p. 15.

[43] J. Gascoigne, 'Banks, Sir Joseph, baronet (1743–1820)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. L. Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1300> [23 July 2012], para. 10 of 24 and Gröndal, *Iceland*, p. 15.

[44] Gröndal, *Iceland*, p. 15.

[45] *Ibid*.

[46] D. F. Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon: Britain and Iceland in the World War II Era* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1983), p. 20.

[47] M. Howard, *The First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 1 and S. B. J. Hardarson, 'The "Republic of Iceland" 1940-1944: Anglo-American Attitudes and Influences', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 9 (1974), p. 27.

unforeseen situation strengthened nationalist sentiment, awoken during the 1800's, and led to increasing calls for renewed autonomy.[48] These demands were eventually met following ratification of the 1918 Dano-Icelandic Act of Union, an Act that accorded the Althing home rule.[49] 'Denmark and Iceland are free and sovereign states',[50] the treaty stipulated, 'united by a common King'.[51] To ensure, however, that the former retained some degree of influence over the latter, it also stipulated that Denmark would remain 'entrusted with the safeguard of Iceland's foreign affairs.'[52] In addition, although no expiry date oversaw any contractual obligations, provision was laid down so that, should either party request it, negotiations could commence following 31 December 1940 for the union to be severed.[53] If negotiations did commence and, after three years, came to nothing, then either the Althing or Rigsdag – Denmark's legislature – had right to cease the union following a successful referendum of two thirds majority.[54] This new situation 'was seen'[55] by all Icelanders, writes Sólrun B. Jensdóttir Hardarson, 'as an important step towards complete independence'.[56]

'Britain had traditionally taken Iceland for granted',[57] writes Donald F. Bittner, an 'attitude from the Royal Navy's command of the sea, the distance of the island from

[48] Hardarson, 'The "Republic of Iceland" 1940-1944', *Journal of Contemporary History*, p. 27.

[49] *Ibid*.

[50] R. W. Flournoy and M. O. Hudson, eds., *A Collection of Nationality Laws of Various Countries: As Contained in Constitutions, Statutes, and Treaties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 688.

[51] *Ibid*.

[52] *Ibid*.

[53] *Ibid*., p.690

[54] A. H. Thomas, *Historical Dictionary of Denmark* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009), s.v. RIGSDAG and Flournoy and Hudson, eds., *A Collection of Nationality Laws of Various Countries*, p. 690.

[55] Hardarson, 'The "Republic of Iceland" 1940-1944', *Journal of Contemporary History*, p. 27.

[56] *Ibid*.

[57] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 16.

London's European enemies, and the island nature of the Icelandic state.'[58] Throughout 1933-1940, however, this complacency disintegrated.[59] Charles Howard-Smith – a towering figure in Anglo-Icelandic relations and someone who and whose work shall be analysed in due course – demonstrates this U-turn succinctly: 'If […] [the British] can fly to Prague and back so can the Germans fly equal distances'.[60]

On 29 November 1933, Sir Hugh Gurney, Britain's minister to Denmark, became the first high-powered British official, during the six year period that preceded the Second World War, to monitor and document German activity in Iceland.[61] He noted disturbing increases in Nazism, a fascist philosophy which had, after just eleven months, attained significant support from the nation's youth.[62] It transpired that these Icelandic Nazis, like those who operated under Adolf Hitler throughout 1925-1933, sought credibility by aligning their political goals alongside prevalent local issues; they campaigned robustly for the formation of an outright republic.[63] Six months later, on 8 May 1934, another report, this time by Howard Little, a lecturer in English at the University of Iceland, Reykjavík, echoed Gurney's observations.[64] 'Conditions here are developing strangely. On May 1 the Nazis had a march through the town, Banners and Band, the biggest procession I have ever seen here.'[65] His bad tidings did not cease there:

[58] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 16.

[59] *Ibid*., pp. 16-25.

[60] The National Archives, FO 371 24779, minute by Howard-Smith, 2 May 1940.

[61] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 17.

[62] *Ibid*.

[63] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 17.

[64] *Ibid*.

[65] The National Archives, FO 371/18262, Little to Hume, 8 May 1934.

> In Reykjavík there are now more than 550 German residents, nearly 400 of these are young men, they formed the main part of the Nazi procession. Should there come war, Germany could take this Island with the population she already has here. There is no force capable of opposing these young men and, so far as I can see, there is nothing to prevent the Consul from having already armed this body.[66]

Despite being branded as an 'alarmist',[67] Little, who had despatched numerous such letters via George Hume MP, successfully alerted the British government to Iceland's gross vulnerability.[68] Consequently, a 'change in perceptions',[69] writes Bittner, 'soon commenced'.[70]

Three years later, Little's security concerns, which were not unique to him, had been far from allayed.[71] In a letter sent from A. C. Höyer to the British Naval Intelligence Division, a letter which was, due to its high political content, redirected to the Foreign Office, numerous comments reaffirmed that the 'Nazi movement [remained] very active'.[72] These comments also affirmed that German agents were 'busy there now',[73] and that German residents were, in the event of war with Britain, preparing for their nation's military forces to 'immediately occupy'[74] the island. Whilst Höyer's report was received with scepticism, as

[66] The National Archives, FO 371/18262, Little to Hume, 8 May 1934.

[67] *Ibid*., minute by an unidentified individual, 27 June 1934, p. 2.

[68] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 17.

[69] *Ibid*.

[70] *Ibid*.

[71] *Ibid*., p. 18

[72] *Ibid*. and The National Archives, FO 371/21075, summary of Höyer to Bassett, 8 February 1937.

[73] The National Archives, FO 371/21075, summary of Höyer to Bassett, 8 February 1937, p. 2.

[74] *Ibid*.

was Little's, a change in attitude immediately took place.[75] This purported German activity, after all, corresponded with the multiple allegations that had previously been made.[76] Therefore, instead of being dismissed forthwith as improbable, the Foreign Office ordered its newly upgraded and installed consul general, John Bowering, to 'investigate',[77] demonstrating a modicum of concern. His findings, as shall be detailed, would have certainly alleviated much of their worry:

> According to the summary of Mr. Höyer's letter, the Nazi movement is very strong in Iceland and there are many Nazi sympathisers. In my opinion, the movement is mainly in the hands of boys and girls of the merchant class who are below the voting age. […] The summery mentioned states further that German spies are busy in Iceland. It is difficult to believe this statement or to visualise the field of their activity, since in this country there are no military or naval defences.[78]

This evaluation seemingly vindicated the Foreign Office's decision to rebuff Little's remarks. Notwithstanding, Bowering did offer a word of warning: 'It is […] true that the Germans have done much to court Icelandic favour, both by sending distinguished visitors and by publishing laudatory books and pamphlets.'[79] Another method, hitherto unmentioned, was by trade.[80] During 1934, Berlin sought to obtain Iceland as a trading partner.[81] In order to

[75] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 18.

[76] *Ibid*.

[77] The National Archives, FO 371/21075, minutes by Falla and Collier, 22 February 1937.

[78] The National Archives, FO 371/21075, 'Memorandum', p. 1. This four page document is not easily identifiable. It begins with a brief description of Höyer and then proceeds to analyse Höyer's letter to Bassett. Page one displays the word *confidential*, pages two to four do not. No date is issued.

[79] *Ibid*.

[80] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 24.

facilitate this new relationship, an official delegation of German representatives visited Reykjavík around November.[82] In return for increased orders of ponies and fish, they requested that thirty-five percent of Iceland's imports, those initially of German origin, be despatched direct from Germany rather than Denmark.[83]

Throughout 1938-1939, Berlin's attempts to seduce Iceland, like a desperate suitor vying for affection, went into overdrive.[84] If Hitler and his political accomplices had not previously been trying to influence this prospective ally, they certainly were trying to now; these leaders knew how strategically important the island would be in a war against Britain.[85] Advances were open, forceful, and diverse in nature.[86] Not even London's most inept observer could now have remained unaware that the Nazis, whilst 'making every effort to create a friendly feeling',[87] wanted to encroach on Icelandic way of life. The first year, 1938, saw established, firstly, Germany's apparent scientific interest, demonstrated by the despatch of numerous teams to investigate various anthropological and geographical subjects, and secondly, Germany's good will, demonstrated by the organisation of football matches.[88] Assistance with aeronautical hobbies, predominantly gliding, also constituted a significant gesture.[89] Over the years leading up to 1938, gliding had developed into a major pastime,

---

[81] The National Archives, FO 371/19429, 'Denmark and Iceland: Annual Report, 1934', 19 January 1935, p. 46.

[82] *Ibid*.

[83] *Ibid*.

[84] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 19.

[85] *Ibid*., p. 50.

[86] *Ibid*., p. 19.

[87] The National Archives, FO 371/23637, 'Denmark and Iceland: Annual Report, 1938', 4 February 1939, p. 25.

[88] *Ibid*. and Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, pp. 19 and 21.

[89] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 19.

particularly for rich and wealthy Icelanders.[90] As a result, German gliding instructors travelled to Iceland and offered free tuition in return for their travel fare.[91] Whether this act of generosity was state sponsored or not remains unclear, however, along with the many other munificent acts, it attracted the attention of the Foreign Office.[92] In addition, there was also an unsettling incident concerning the violation of Icelandic security.[93] When Germany's minister to Denmark, Cécil von Renthe-Fink, paid an official visit to Iceland, his trip coincided with an impromptu visit by the German cruiser *Emden*.[94] A show of strength proceeded; *Emden's* sailors marched through Reykjavík to Nazi songs.[95] This transgression, for that is how it was perceived, greatly unsettled everybody.[96] As a result, Bowering, who had dutifully recorded every aspect of German activity since his inception as consul general, notified London.[97]

The second year, 1939, saw established an increase in activity from Germany's scientific teams.[98] Many of these scientists, reportedly commissioned by Heinrich Himmler, were less than qualified for the research they purported to undertake.[99] Furthermore, their

[90] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 19.

[91] *Ibid*.

[92] *Ibid*.

[93] *Ibid*., p. 20.

[94] The National Archives, FO 371/23637, 'Denmark and Iceland: Annual Report, 1938', 4 February 1939, p. 25 and Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 20.

[95] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 20.

[96] *Ibid*.

[97] The National Archives, FO 371/23637, 'Denmark and Iceland: Annual Report, 1938', 4 February 1939, p. 25.

[98] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 20.

[99] *Ibid*.

work was of dubious quality and, more importantly, suspected of harbouring ulterior motives such as invasion planning.[100] Substantiating this point, Bittner writes:

> Although the cultural and historical centres of Iceland were in the south and southwest, the anthropologists concentrated in the northeast. […] [They also] laboured in areas of flat and sandy terrain admirably suited for aircraft landing grounds or which had sheltered and deep harbours.[101]

For this reason, the Althing became so concerned it decided to pass a resolution which stipulated, firstly, 'need for more extensive and better organised investigations',[102] and secondly, 'that no investigations […] [could] be carried out by foreigners except in co-operation with and with the permission of the Board controlling'[103] such endeavours. Eventually, during March 1939, perhaps the most serious act of German harassment, which would ultimately backfire, took place.[104] One undisclosed day, the German cruiser *Emden*, mentioned earlier, and a delegation from Lufthansa, Germany's principle airline, arrived unannounced, simultaneously, and, so it initially appeared, on separate business.[105] The former intended to undertake a six week visit, the latter to initiate some favourable aviation agreements between both Lufthansa and the Icelandic government which they perceived to have existed since 1931.[106] This joint visit, however, appeared less coincidental the more

[100] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 21.

[101] *Ibid.*

[102] The National Archives, FO 371/23637, 'Parliamentary Resolution'.

[103] *Ibid.*

[104] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 23.

[105] *Ibid.*

[106] *Ibid.*

Reykjavík considered refusing.[107] When pressuring statements, aggressively supportive of Lufthansa's bid, arrived from Berlin, and when it was realised that German military activity had suddenly increased around Iceland's territorial waters, it is hardly surprising both Reykjavík and London saw the whole exchange, writes Bittner, as 'a veiled attempt at gunboat diplomacy'.[108] Therefore, the Icelandic government completely rejected Lufthansa's concessions request, maintaining a need for impartiality.[109]

Throughout 1938-1939, Icelanders from all walks of life had remained very wary of Germany's interest.[110] Some went so far as to call it 'aggression'.[111] They were also deeply frustrated by Britain's apparent naivety, or apathy, to what was happening.[112] These attitudes came to light during May 1939 through an intelligence gathering mission, masquerading as a holiday in Iceland undertaken by Foreign Office clerk B. E. F. Gage.[113] At last, after two years of procrastination and, due to this idleness, increasing worry, London had taken some tangible action.[114] Gage hoped, by drawing on Bowering's previous notifications, to establish once and for all what 'the Icelandic government and Icelanders in general [felt] towards […] [Britain] and Germany',[115] and also 'to obtain some idea of the scope and

[107] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 24.

[108] *Ibid*., pp. 23-24.

[109] *Ibid*., p. 24.

[110] *Ibid*., pp. 25-26.

[111] The National Archives, FO 371/23640, 'Report on Visit to Iceland', p. 3.

[112] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 25.

[113] *Ibid*., p. 25.

[114] *Ibid*.

[115] The National Archives, FO 371/23640, 'Report on Visit to Iceland', p. 1.

degree of successes of German'[116] activity. What he discovered was less than reassuring and would, ultimately, go some way in changing British policy.[117]

London's decision to invade and occupy Iceland did not, contrary to popular belief, result from one factor but several.[118] On 29 April 1940, just under eight months into Anglo-German hostilities, senior Admiralty personnel concluded that, following the substantial build-up of enemy air and naval bases along the Norwegian coast, it would be necessary to counter these threats by constructing similar such facilities within North Atlantic waters.[119] They also predicted that Germany, in face of strategic necessity, would have little regard for Iceland's neutrality, a turn of events which already afflicted Denmark.[120] Furthermore, and most unsettling of all, an understanding was reached as to what Britain's response would be should German forces make landfall:

> It is […] evident that a German landing in Iceland, being a direct menace to […] [homeland] security, would have as its consequence that the shores of Iceland became [*sic*] a battle-ground on which […] [British forces] should be compelled to take extreme measures for the destruction of the enemy.[121]

[116] The National Archives, FO 371/23640, 'Report on Visit to Iceland', p. 1.

[117] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 25.

[118] D. F. Bittner, 'A Final Appraisal of the British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-1942', *The RUSI Journal*, 120 (1975), pp. 46-47.

[119] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

[120] *Ibid.*, p. 47 and Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, p. 115.

[121] The National Archives, FO 371/24778, Philips to Butler, 29 April 1940, p. 2.

On 30 April 1940, one day later, these three key sentiments were evaluated by senior Foreign Office personnel, who quickly concurred with them.[122] Consequently, to enable the first and prevent both the second and third, preparation for an expedition, codenamed Operation *Fork*, commenced.[123] Sir Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, provides in his diary a good insight into the psychological condition of Britain's leaders throughout this period: 'Planning [the] conquest of Iceland for next week. Shall probably be too late!'[124] On 6 May 1940, with Britain's strategic situation in dire straits, *Fork* was finalised and approved.[125] On 8 May 1940, two days later, the 2nd Royal Marine Battalion set sail on four Royal Navy ships: two destroyers – HMS *Berwick* and HMS *Glasgow* – and two cruisers – HMS *Fortune* and HMS *Fearless*.[126] As shall be detailed, these troops were undertaking, what could justifiably have been seen as, a suicide mission.[127]

London had never wanted to illegally trespass on Icelandic territory, neither had it wanted to force war onto a nation that sought peace.[128] For this reason, diplomacy was attempted first, an approach proven by the following telegram dated 9 April 1940:

> His Majesty's Government […] are resolved to prevent Iceland from sharing the fate of Denmark and will take whatever action is necessary for this purpose. Such action

[122] Bittner, 'A Final Appraisal of the British Occupation of Iceland', *The RUSI Journal*, p. 47.

[123] *Ibid*. and Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 40.

[124] D. Dilks, ed., *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938-1945* (London: Cassell and Co., 1971), p. 276.

[125] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 38.

[126] *Ibid*., pp. 41-42; The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 7 May 1940, 07:30; and The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 8 May 1940, 03:45.

[127] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, pp. 41-42.

[128] *Ibid*., p. 34.

> may require that His Majesty's Government should be given certain facilities in Iceland itself.[129]

Reykjavík, however, declined:

> The Icelandic Government now, as before, highly appreciate and are grateful for the sympathy and friendship […] and for the interest […] [shown by] His Majesty's Government. […] The position of Iceland is, however, that when […] [its] independence […] was recognised in 1918, […] permanent neutrality was declared.[130]

This response was very frustrating and served only to increase tensions.[131] Signifying, perhaps, a degree of desperation, London then requested, on 27 April 1940, that Reykjavík expel all German nationals, including Germany's consul general, thus eliminating any risk of insurrection.[132] Again, Reykjavík declined, prompting the Admiralty to commence preparations for *Fork* two days later.[133]

Contrary to London's belief, Iceland was at very little risk of invasion by Germany throughout the Second World War.[134] It should not be assumed, however, that Berlin never considered doing so.[135] As has been previously detailed, the German high command was

[129] The National Archives, FO 371/24778, anonymous to Bowering, 9 April 1940.

[130] *Ibid.*, Howe to anonymous, 11 April 1940.

[131] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 35.

[132] *Ibid.*

[133] *Ibid.*

[134] Bittner, 'A Final Appraisal of the British Occupation of Iceland', *The RUSI Journal*, p. 47.

[135] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, pp. 50-51.

well aware of Iceland's strategic importance.[136] Consequently, Hitler ordered, both before and after Britain's landing, that the island should fall under Nazi control.[137] The name subsequently issued to this plan was Operation *Fall Ikarus*.[138] Furthermore, 'utopian schemes'[139] for the invasion and occupation of other minor localities, such as the Canary archipelago and Cape Verde archipelago, existed.[140] Each constituted part of Hitler's end goal of possessing, writes Holger H. Herwig, 'a solid belt of German holdings stretching from the Cameroons to the coast of East Africa, the return to Germany of South-West Africa, large areas of Morocco, and control of the Atlantic Islands'.[141] Indeed, this ambition, unsurprisingly, led to a diagnosis of 'island madness'[142] – no doubt amongst other things – by his senior officers.

In a letter from Rear Admiral Walter Ansel to Bittner, a brief sentence is included which sums up the peculiar mood that existed in both Berlin and London during 1940: 'The Germans thought they could take anything and the British that anything might happen'.[143] Whilst very simplistic, this quote goes some way to explaining why the German high command believed that Hitler's plan was feasible and also why the British high command

[136] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 50.

[137] *Ibid*., pp. 50-51.

[138] *Ibid*.

[139] *Ibid*., p. 50, cited from Rear Admiral K. J. von Puttkamer to D. F. Bittner (unpublished correspondence, 17 April and/or 26 August 1973).

[140] *Ibid*., p. 50.

[141] H. H. Herwig, *Politics of Frustration: The United States in German Naval Planning, 1889-1941* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1976), p. 209.

[142] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 50, cited from Rear Admiral K. J. von Puttkamer to D. F. Bittner (unpublished correspondence, 17 April and/or 26 August 1973).

[143] *Ibid*., cited from Rear Admiral W. Ansel to D. F. Bittner (unpublished correspondence, 19 September and/or 7 November 1971).

concurred.[144] Neither belligerent, it would appear, appreciated the impracticalities.[145] There were, however, certain individuals within the German high command who did, particularly those involved with *Fall Ikarus*: 'An occupation of Iceland',[146] quotes Bittner from the *War Diary of the German Naval Staff,* 'will not entail any improvement of the strategic situation […] since the sea area around Iceland and between Iceland and the Faeroes is not controlled by German forces'.[147] Consider, for a moment, these impracticalities. The North Atlantic was infested by Royal Navy cruisers and Royal Navy auxiliary cruisers.[148] Therefore, any German troopship headed for Iceland would have been at tremendous risk of interception and, due to the Kriegsmarine's vastly inferior size, complete destruction.[149] Parachute troops, too, were unfeasible as the Junkers Ju 52/3m had insufficient range to reach Iceland from Norway and return.[150]

On 20 June 1940, more than five weeks after Britain's landing, *Fall Ikarus* was discussed between Grand Admiral Eric Raeder and Hitler.[151] They established together that, throughout the course of such an operation, it would be 'impossible to maintain continuous supplies'[152] and, more importantly, that the 'entire navy would have to be used'.[153] As a

---

[144] D. F. Bittner, 'The British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-1942' (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Missouri, 1974), p. 104.

[145] *Ibid.*

[146] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 51, cited from US Navy Operational Archives, War Diary of the German Naval Staff (Operations Division), War Diary entry/entries, 11 and/or 12 June 1940.

[147] *Ibid.*

[148] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 52.

[149] S. W. Roskill, *The War at Sea, 1939-1945*: The Defensive* (London: HMSO, 1976), p. 58.

[150] B. Quarrie, *German Airborne Divisions: Blitzkrieg, 1940-1941* (Botley: Osprey Publishing, 2004), p. 22 and Bittner, 'A Final Appraisal of the British Occupation of Iceland', *The RUSI Journal*, p.46.

[151] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 52.

[152] A. Martienssen, ed., *Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs, 1939-1945* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2005), p. 112.

[153] *Ibid.*

result, Reader opposed any further development.[154] This stance led, subsequently, to the shelving of *Fall Ikarus*.[155] Hitler did not have the manpower to obtain and hold his projected borders, a deficiency that was made very clear: 'The lack of an adequate fleet will constitute a continual drawback in the case of further expansion of the war, in the occupation, for example, the Cannery archipelago, the Cape Verde archipelago, the Azores, Dakar, [and] Iceland.'[156]

Research on Iceland throughout the Second World War has always remained sparse. British, American and Canadian scholars, for reasons unknown, dedicate little time or effort to it. Icelandic scholars, too, appear similarly disinterested. Substantiating this latter point, Guðmundur Hálfdanarson writes:

> In the year 2000, the leading historical journal in Iceland, Saga […], ran a whole issue on the course of Icelandic twentieth-century historiography. […] Reading the twelve contributions, one is struck by the limited amount of attention Icelandic historians have paid to the Second World War and its role in Icelandic history.[157]

During 2012, the perceived total of trustworthy secondary sources, written in English, with sections dedicated entirely to the subject, comprised two unpublished doctoral submissions – Bittner, D. F., 'The British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-1942' (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Missouri, 1974)*;* Whitehead, T., 'Iceland in the Second World War, 1939-1946' (unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1978) – two published books –

[154] Herwig, *Politics of Frustration*, p. 211.

[155] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 53.

[156] *Ibid*., cited from F. I. Hinsley, *Hitler's Strategy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951).

[157] G. Hálfdanarson, 'The Beloved War: The Second World War and the Icelandic National Narrative' in *Nordic Narratives of the Second World War: National Historiographies Revisited*, eds. H. Stenius, M. Österberg, and J Östling (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2011), p. 79.

Bittner, D. F., *The Lion and the White Falcon: Britain and Iceland in the World War II Era* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1983); Chamberlin, W. C., *Economic Development of Iceland through World War II* (New York: AMS Press, 1968) – and three published journal articles – Bittner, D. F., 'A Final Appraisal of the British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-1942', *The RUSI Journal*, 120 (1975), 45-53; Bittner, D. F., 'Canadian Militia Mobilization and Deployment for War: The Iceland Experience of 1940', *Armed Forces and Society*, 18 (1992), 343-361; Hardarson, S. B. J., 'The "Republic of Iceland" 1940-1944: Anglo-American Attitudes and Influences', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 9 (1974), 27-56. With the majority of these works being written by one particular scholar, Donald F. Bittner, the scope of documented research on the subject derives from a narrow range of sources which limits the diversity of interpretation within the historiography. Compounding this, not all the research is readily available in the public domain. As a result, only four works were utilised – the two books and the first and third journal articles listed above.

This small collection of works is diverse in nature. It comprises two general surveys – Bittner's *The Lion and the White Falcon* and 'A Final Appraisal of the British Occupation of Iceland' – and two more specific works – Chamberlin's *Economic Development of Iceland through World War II* and Hardarson's 'The "Republic of Iceland" 1940-1944'. Each focuses their subject matter on various aspects of the events in Iceland throughout 1939-1945. Bittner's *The Lion and the White Falcon*, published during 1983, is a comprehensive textbook on Anglo-Icelandic transactions throughout 1939-1945. Bittner's 'A Final Appraisal of the British Occupation of Iceland', published during 1975 in *The RUSI Journal*, is a comprehensive article that, because of its date of publication, subject matter and length, constitutes a detailed synopsis to *The Lion and the White Falcon*. Chamberlin's *Economic Development of Iceland through World War II*, published during 1968, is a valuable little textbook that discusses Iceland's ascension throughout 1939-1945 out of fiscal depression

into relative prosperity. Hardarson's 'The "Republic of Iceland" 1940-1944', published during 1974 in *Journal of Contemporary History*, is a lengthy article that discusses the affect of the British occupation on 'Iceland's last step towards complete independence'.[158]

At a fundamental level, all four works address the theme of Britain's actions in Iceland. At a more detailed level, however, this theme is addressed from completely different standpoints. Bittner's works attempt to look at every aspect of Britain's actions in Iceland, ranging from the actual invasion, the subsequent decisions that were made regarding the defence of Iceland and the appeasement of Iceland, the conduct of British troops in Iceland, and the decisions made that impacted on the internal running of Iceland. Chamberlin's work, by contrast, looks at Britain's actions in Iceland from purely an economic point of view, discussing how the influx of troops brought money and infrastructure projects thus creating employment. Hardarson's work also limits the theme by only addressing the impact of Britain's actions on Iceland's attempts to declare itself as a republic.

An important point that arises through analysing all four works is that when the same subject matter is covered in the different sources, there is little disparity found in the information that is provided. This suggests that such information is reliable. For example, when Bittner discusses the effects that Britain's construction programmes had on Iceland's economy, his work, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, presents an almost identical set of facts as does Chamberlin in his more specialised work, *Economic Development of Iceland through World War II*, produced over a decade previously. Indeed, the proof that Bittner did not utilise the passages from Chamberlin's work lies within the endnotes – instead of citing *Economic Development of Iceland through World War II*, it cites a number of archival sources.[159]

[158] Hardarson, 'The 'Republic of Iceland' 1940-44', *Journal of Contemporary History*, p. 29.

[159] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 83 and 174, see endnote 53.

All four works derive from ground breaking research. Bittner's works are adapted from his PhD dissertation, 'The British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-1942', whilst Chamberlin's and Hardarson's works are original pieces of research in themselves. What they share in common is that none would appear to investigate, or seek to answer, any hypothesis or central question. To all intents and purposes, they comprise, and thus render the historiography as, a collection of chronological narratives rather than a collection of analytical studies. Indeed, this observation was also made by *Hálfdanarson.*[160] Consequently, there exists exciting opportunities for the historiography's expansion, not just in size, but also in nature of content. Where then shall this dissertation fit within? Well, rather than contributing yet another chronological narrative, it shall offer a much needed analytical study, one that evaluates, for the first time, whether Britain, Iceland, America and Canada benefited from their actions/troubles. With that in mind, this dissertation shall answer one specific question: to what extent did the British invasion and occupation of Iceland preserve Icelandic freedoms and secure Allied interests in Northern Europe?

This dissertation comprises two chapters. Chapter One covers proceedings throughout 10-19 May 1940, the period in which the Royal Marines invaded, consolidated and commenced the British occupation of Iceland. It is also the period in which the British Army relieved the Royal Marines and assumed control. The chapter will assess whether Operation *Fork* was a success and whether Iceland was secured from German invasion. Chapter Two, by contrast, covers proceedings throughout 20 May 1940-22 April 1942, the period in which the British Army, with assistance from the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, guarded Iceland from enemy belligerents. The chapter will assess whether Iceland was reimbursed and rewarded for its trouble and whether the British occupation of Iceland was necessary for an Allied victory.

[160] Hálfdanarson, 'The Beloved War' in *Nordic Narratives of the Second World War*, p. 79.

By contrast to the historiography, there exist a vast number of primary sources. Some are original works – books or articles that have been written and published during, or close to, the events they detail. Some are reproductions of original works – personal memoirs and diaries that have been edited and published during, close to, or far from the events they detail. Most, however, are unpublished archival sources; these can be found at The National Archives – formerly the Public Record Office – in Kew, Surrey.

None of the published primary sources that fall within the first category were ever intended by their authors as histories. Indeed, reasons for their publication were diverse. An example of this can be found when analysing the following two. Whilst Michael Bratby and Ernest Watkins' *Iceland Presents: An Assembly of Articles and Stories*, published during c. 1941, had been produced as a personal memento for those who served in Iceland, Leslie Roberts' 'They Never Had Seen a Soldier', published during 1940 in *The Saturday Evening Post*, has obviously been written for a commercial publication.[161] Consequently, the type of information that can be divulged from these sources will vary greatly. Four diverse sources have been utilised in this dissertation, the two aforementioned publications, along with Philip Coggin's *The British Occupation of Iceland*, published during 2009, and Eric Linklater's *The Northern Garrisons*, published during 1941.

Being a souvenir book, Bratby's and Watkins' *Iceland Presents* gives an interesting and sometimes artistic insight into the general mood of the British service personnel who served there. This is because it comprises contributions – poems, articles, stories, transcripts from radio broadcasts and photographs – that have been produced by British service personnel themselves. Written for commercial publication, Roberts' 'They Never Had Seen a Soldier' provides an all-round article comprising some geographical contextualisation; analysis on the strategic importance of Iceland to North America, including the decision to

[161] M. Bratby and E. Watkins, 'Preface', in *Iceland Presents: An Assembly of Articles and Stories*, eds. M. Bratby and E. Watkins (Reykjavík: Snæbjörn Jónsson, c. 1941), p. 3.

invade; an element of human-interest; and humorous stories on interaction between Icelandic civilians and Allied soldiers. It stands today as an incredibly important piece of evidence. Canada's contribution to the defence of Iceland has been, bar one journal article and one section of a book, largely overlooked in the historiography.[162] Therefore, this first-hand account will prove invaluable to scholars until more research can be contributed. Being a first-hand account written for commercial purposes, but one that failed to make publication at time of authorship, Coggin's *The British Occupation of Iceland* is a work that holds the rare, if not unique, position of comprising personal testimony alongside complete transcriptions of public information leaflets and newspaper articles, with those of Icelandic origin having been translated. As a result, it assists in providing an insight into personal perceptions of the time and can also be used as a repository for other sources no longer in existence or restricted due to language barriers. Another work written for commercial publication, Eric Linklaters' *The Northern Garrisons*, gives an interesting and unofficial perspective on life in Iceland, particularly for British soldiers throughout 1940-1942.

Whilst the four publications listed above were contemporary to the time, three of these works promote the unwavering belief that Iceland was close to being invaded by Germany, emphasising the necessity for the British occupation. Lesley Roberts, for example, writes that the invasion 'is of major import to Canada',[163] giving various logical reasons for this. This is a sentiment concurred by Linklater and Coggin, the former who writes: 'The islands have served a strategic purpose of the highest importance.'[164] Indeed, the common theme throughout these primary sources is the solid belief that the British occupation was the best action that could have been taken. It could be argued that these publications constituted

[162] D. F. Bittner, 'Canadian Militia Mobilization and Deployment for War: The Iceland Experience of 1940', *Armed Forces and Society*, 18 (1992), 343-361 and Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, pp. 115-122.

[163] Roberts, 'They Never Had Seen a Soldier', *The Saturday Earning Post*, p. 87.

[164] Linklater, *The Northern Garrisons*, p. 15.

works of propaganda. By contrast, Bratby's and Watkins' contemporary work, *Iceland Presents,* is conspicuous by offering no opinion on this issue.

The numerous archival sources come from a range of different governmental organisations: the Admiralty, the Air Ministry, the Foreign Office and the War Office. Documents that originate from the Admiralty will typically cover events that pertain to the Royal Navy in Iceland. As the initial invasion of Iceland was conducted by the Royal Marines, and as the Royal Navy maintained a heavy presence in Iceland right up until 1945, many important and insightful documents exist, the most useful of which – including ADM 202/50 and ADM 202/400 – are utilised within this dissertation.[165] Documents that originate from the Air Ministry typically cover events that pertain to the Royal Air Force in Iceland. However, as the Royal Air Force aircraft that were initially stationed on Iceland answered to the British Army's General Officer Commanding, many of the important documents that pertain to such matters actually can be found within War Office documentation.[166] Notwithstanding, Air Ministry documentation contain a plethora of information that should not be disregarded. Documents that originate from the Foreign Office typically cover events that pertain to the British Legation in Iceland. These are the most insightful of all the different types of archival sources; they constitute a barometer on relations between Icelandic civilians and British troops and between the Icelandic Government and British authorities on Iceland and, in effect, tell the story of the British invasion and occupation of Iceland. The most useful individual items within these portfolios are the Annual Reviews on events in Iceland for each successive year. Every event of importance is discussed and explained within these reviews which render them an excellent starting point from which to analyse proceedings. Documents that originate from the War Office, by contrast to each of the aforementioned, will cover events that pertain to all aspects of the occupation, both military

[165] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, pp. 41 and 144.

[166] The National Archives, WO 106/3040. This portfolio of documents is subtitled 'Royal Air Force in Iceland'.

and political. This is because the British Army was so intrinsically linked with the everyday affairs of Iceland; indeed, Icelandic life would have to function around the requirements of the defending force, not vice versa.[167] What is made apparent from all these unpublished archival sources is the desperation of the British situation throughout the early stages of the occupation. United stances were being taken by British Army and Foreign Office representatives on the island pleading for greater equipment and more reinforcements. The three military services each display within their documents a distinct level of alertness about their vulnerability on the island, with Foreign Office representatives paying particular attention to the exposed state that the islanders found themselves in.[168]

In summary, this dissertation – entitled 'The Uninvited Guests: Britain's Military Forces in Iceland, 1940-1942' – investigates the British invasion and occupation of Iceland, 1940-1942, and seeks to answer one specific question: to what extent did the British invasion and occupation of Iceland preserve Icelandic freedoms and secure Allied interests in Northern Europe? Chapter One covers proceedings throughout 10-19 May 1940; Chapter Two covers proceedings throughout 20 May 1940-22 April 1942. Both focus their analysis on two themes, freedom preservation and security. This dissertation shall be written using a wide variety of primary sources from The National Archives and secondary sources by Bittner, Chamberlin and Hardarson.

[167] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, pp. 93-107.

[168] The National Archives, AIR 40/1375, Howard-Smith to anonymous, 24 May 1940.

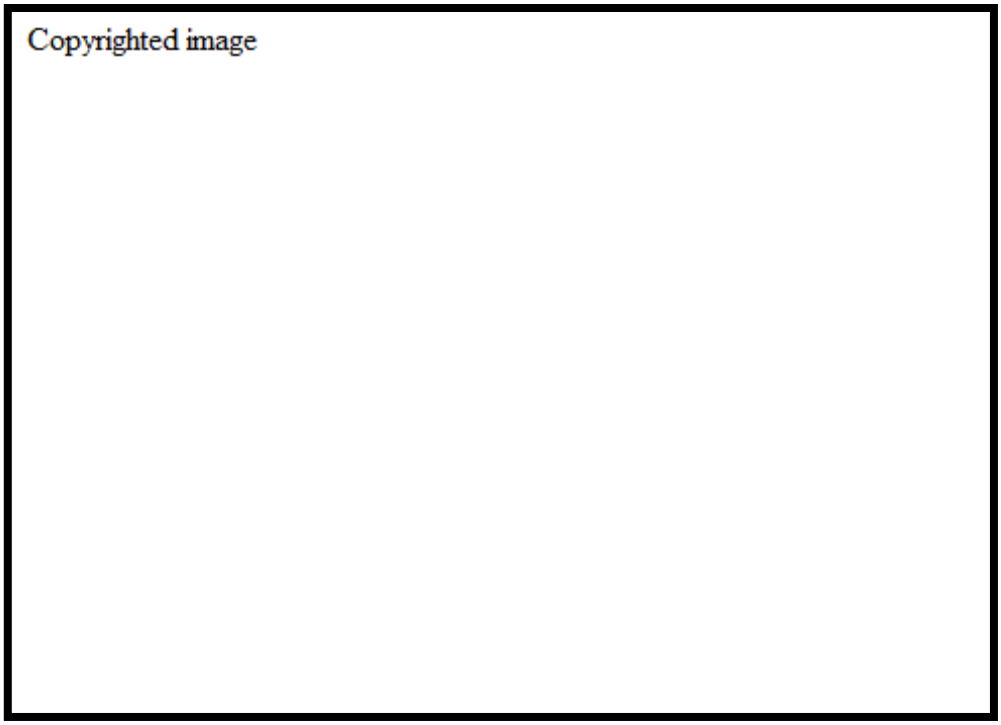

Figure One[169] – A map of Iceland.

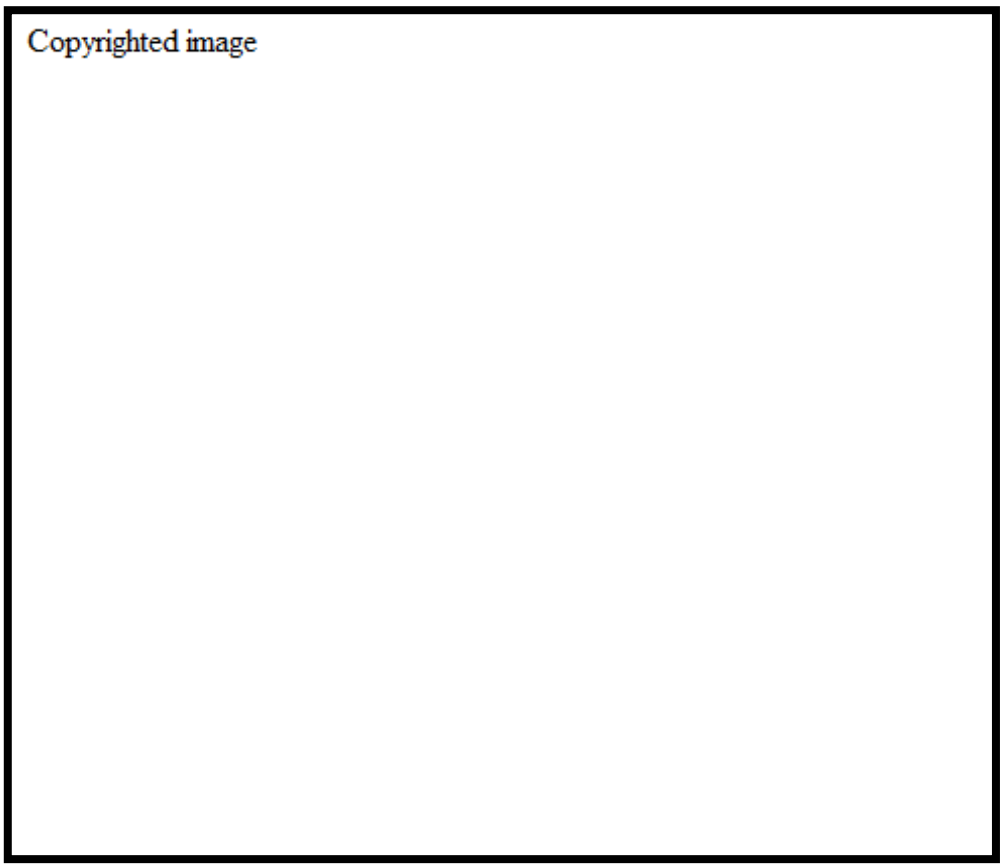

Figure Two[170] – A map of the Atlantic islands.

[169] Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, p. xiv.

[170] *Ibid*., p. 10.

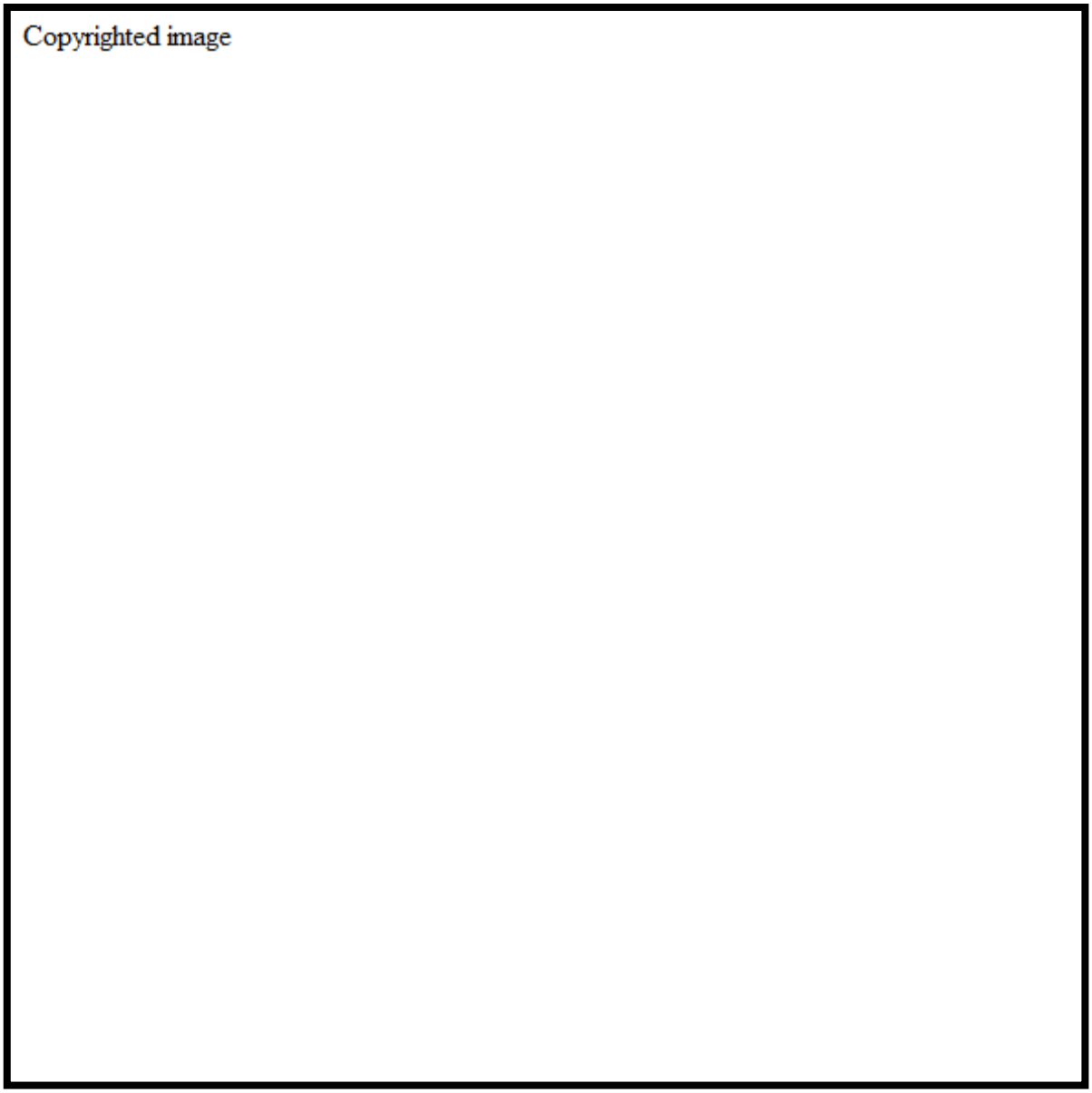

Figure Three[171] – A diagram showing the course of Scandinavia's ruling dynasties.

[171] Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, p. 101.

Chapter One: Invasion and Occupation, 10-19 May 1940

When purely considering the sequence of events of Operation *Fork* and measuring the outcomes against its objectives, a scholar may well conclude that the enterprise had been conducted with total success. Only with an in-depth analysis of the preparation of the enterprise and the force deployed can it be understood that the outcome was more a result of good fortune rather than careful planning and execution. On 10 May 1940, 815 Marines from 2nd Royal Marine Battalion (hereafter 2RM), commanded by Colonel Robert Sturges, made landfall at Reykjavík, Iceland.[1] Their objective was to secure Iceland from German invasion.[2] It had been a dreadful crossing.[3] Throughout, the Marines took up every square foot of available space lying 'prostrate with sea-sickness'.[4] So bad were conditions that, on arrival, many suffered from 'considerable instability'.[5] After disembarkation, however, a significant degree of recovery took place (see figures four and five).[6] Whilst one company headed 154 miles north to secure Akureyri, Iceland's second largest settlement, the rest proceeded with guides drafted from local British residents to secure key facilities in or near Reykjavík: the various communication offices, the wireless station, the police armoury, the German consulate, the proposed seaplane base at Vatnagarður, and the proposed landing grounds at Kaldaðarnes and Sandskeið.[7] Very few setbacks occurred and no significant

[1] F. M. Shepherd, 'Zero Hour' in Iceland Presents: An Assembuly of Articles and Stories, eds. M. Bratby and E. Watkins (Reykjavík: Snæbjörn Jónsson, c. 1941).

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] S. Foreman, 'Stan Foreman's War Years, 1939-1945' in *WW2 People's War: An Archive of World War Two Memories*, ed./eds. anonymous (London: BBC Future Media, 2006) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/00/a8604100.shtml> [23 July 2012], para. 10 of 51.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 10 May 1940, 05:00.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] The National Archives, ADM 202/400, 'Letter of Proceedings', 27 May 1940, p. 2; G. Hálfdanarson, *Historical Dictionary of Iceland* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2008), s.v. AKUREYRI; The National Archives,

opposition was met (see figure six).[8] 'The total damage'[9] inflicted, writes F. M. Shepherd, amounted to 'one broken door.'[10] Accompanying 2RM on its mission was Charles Howard-Smith, the newest and most senior addition to Britain's legation in Iceland.[11] He was travelling there as a minister – a senior diplomat ranking just below that of ambassador.[12] Once the surrounding area had been brought under British control, Howard-Smith disembarked and proceeded into Reykjavík for consultation with Iceland's government (see figure seven).[13] In addition to explaining London's actions, he also had been instructed to issue a personal letter from King George VI as a token of Britain's good intentions.[14] After an exchange of platitudes, Howard-Smith presented his credentials and royal communiqué.[15] He stated that 'British forces […] [had] landed in Iceland for the purpose of securing certain bases'[16] and that, with these bases, British forces 'could prevent the war [from] coming near Iceland.'[17] He also made clear his view on Iceland's situation: 'Neutrality is an unenviable state, but it can be maintained if force is there to protect it.'[18] Finally, Howard-Smith inferred

---

FO 371/24779, Howard-Smith to Halifax, 29 May 1940, p. 1; and The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 10 May 1940, 05:20.

[8] The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 10 May 1940, 05:20.

[9] Shepherd, 'Zero Hour', in *Iceland Presents*, p. 24.

[10] *Ibid*.

[11] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, Howard-Smith to Halifax, 29 May 1940, pp. 1-4.

[12] G. R. Berridge and L. Lloyd, *The Palgrave Macmillan Dictionary of Diplomacy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), s.v. MINISTER.

[13] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, Howard-Smith to Halifax, 29 May 1940, p. 2.

[14] *Ibid*.

[15] *Ibid*.

[16] Shepherd, 'Zero Hour', in *Iceland Presents*, p. 23.

[17] *Ibid*.

[18] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, minute by Howard-Smith, 2 May 1940.

that there would be financial compensation for Iceland's trouble.[19] Reaction, whilst somewhat sombre, was far friendlier than anticipated.[20] The Prime Minister, Hermann Jónasson, replied that 'the Icelandic government for their part did not believe that the Germans would make a descent upon the island, but as […] [the British] had come in a spirit of good will, they would co-operate'[21] (see figure eight). The following analysis shall address three key themes with an intention to demonstrate how and why the aforementioned sequence of events misrepresents *Fork* as a triumph. Firstly, it shall measure *Fork's* outcomes against its objectives; secondly, it shall establish *Fork's* quality of preparation, focusing on organisation and composition of force; and thirdly, it shall establish the opposition forces that were predicted to be confronted. The analysis shall show that *Fork* was liable to fail with the slightest of opposition. In all, the analysis shall demonstrate that, for the duration of *Fork*, Icelandic freedoms were not been preserved and Allied interests not secured.

Whilst researching the aforementioned sequence of events, scholars can be forgiven for initially believing that Operation *Fork* was very successful. After all, every major objective issued to Colonel Sturges had been accomplished: firstly, 'to use such force as […] necessary to obtain control of the Island';[22] secondly, 'to ensure that resident enemy aliens […] or persons acting on behalf of or assisting the enemy […] be arrested or put under

[19] R. C. Mee 'The Foreign Policy of the Chamberlin Wartime Administration, September 1939-May 1940' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1998), p. 227.

[20] The National Archives, ADM 202/400, 'Letter of Proceedings', 27 May 1940, p. 3 and The National Archives, FO 371/24779, Howard-Smith to anonymous, 10 May 1940.

[21] Shepherd, 'Zero Hour', in *Iceland Presents*, p. 23.

[22] The National Archives, ADM 202/400, anonymous to Colonel Sturges, p. 1. This four page document is not easily identifiable. It begins with a paragraph explaining why Colonel Sturges received these instructions and then proceeds to detail all sixteen one after another. Page one displays the partially smudged words *most secret*, pages two to four do not. No date is issued.

effective control';[23] thirdly 'to make defensive arrangements […] to prevent the Germans from occupying Reykjavík';[24] fourthly, 'to obtain the co-operation of local [police] forces';[25] and fifthly, 'to cultivate friendly relations with the authorities and community at large'.[26] As has already been detailed, only modest force was required for Britain to impose its authority over Iceland; the general population and government succumbed without any resistance. Success in those latter four objectives, however, remains to be analysed.

When 2RM made landfall, enemy prisoners were swiftly taken.[27] Many, including the German consul general, Dr Werner Gerlach, were captured immediately (see figures nine and ten).[28] On that first day, Iceland's contingent of German nationals had, as instructed by senior Admiralty personnel, largely been rounded up and transferred via the Royal Navy to various internment camps in Britain.[29] Several individuals, however, evaded arrest and hid for months – one even hid for a year – before being apprehended.[30]

From the moment 2RM had gained effective control of Iceland, defence plans for Reykjavík were prepared. When finalised on 14 May 1940, four days later, they fully incorporated every available resource.[31] Indeed, the defence plans make chilling reading and highlight just how difficult 2RM's strategic situation was. It had been decided that Germany's most likely methods of attack would be, either, by deploying aircraft to land troops at airfields near Reykjavík, by deploying aircraft to drop parachute troops near or over

[23] The National Archives, ADM 202/400, anonymous to Colonel Sturges, p. 1.

[24] *Ibid*., p. 2.

[25] *Ibid*.

[26] *Ibid*.

[27] *Ibid*., 'Letter of Proceedings', 27 May 1940, p. 2.

[28] *Ibid*.

[29] The National Archives, ADM 202/400, 'Letter of Proceedings', 27 May 1940, p. 2.

[30] The National Archives, WO 176/288, War Diary entry, 21 May 1941.

[31] The National Archives, ADM 202/400, 'Letter of Proceedings', 27 May 1940, p. 4.

Reykjavík, by deploying boats to land troops at Reykjavík harbour, or by deploying boats to land troops far from Reykjavík where a base could be established.[32] It had also been suggested, and expected, that all four aforementioned methods would be utilised together.[33] In addition, there was significant concern as to the nature of Germany's tactics during an airborne assault; it was feared that, in a bid to confuse the British defenders, the Germans would descend wearing civilian clothes or British Battle Dress.[34] Therefore, Colonel Sturges ordered for particularly harsh penalties – not dissimilar from those in operation throughout Britain – for dealing with such opponents: 'They are to be shot during [the] decent and on [the] ground. If wearing civilian clothes or British Battle Dress, […] [they should] not […] be captured but shot forthwith.'[35]

The fourth objective was accomplished despite considerable effort by Agnar Kofoed-Hansen, Iceland's Chief of Police, to bring about more a negative outcome. Kofoed-Hansen was a suspected Nazi sympathiser; he had been a guest of Heinrich Himmler whilst on a tour of police training centres in Germany.[36] Both 2RM's war diarist and Colonel Sturges recount numerous examples throughout 10-19 May 1940 where Kofoed-Hansen became either deliberately uncooperative or suspiciously deceptive during his dealings with Marine personnel.[37] Notwithstanding, a basic working relationship – no doubt facilitated through successful completion of the fifth and final objective – was established with Icelandic police,

[32] The National Archives, ADM 202/50, 'Operation Order No. 2', 12 May 1940, p. 1.

[33] *Ibid*.

[34] *Ibid*.

[35] *Ibid*. For details as to British policy on dealing with German parachute troops over the United Kingdom, see N. R. Storey, *The Home Guard* (Botley: Shire Publications, 2009), pp. 6-7.

[36] The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 11 May 1940 and Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 44.

[37] The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 11 May 1940 and The National Archives, ADM 202/400, 'Letter of Proceedings', 27 May 1940, p. 3.

one that can be demonstrated by some recorded incidents of Icelanders being arrested for deliberately harassing and/or assaulting on-duty Marines.[38]

Positive relations developed quickly between both the British and the Icelandic authorities which subsequently enhanced everybody's ability to co-operate with each other. Nowhere are these sentiments better demonstrated than through a firsthand account written by Howard-Smith.[39] Within this account, he reveals how deeply touched Jónasson was by the sentiments expressed in King George VI's letter and, more importantly, that 'friendly and informal talk on general subjects'[40] had been facilitated.

Other factors that might make Operation *Fork* appear successful include, firstly, the fact no casualties – bar one suicide committed onboard ship by a Marine on 10 May 1940 – were either sustained or inflicted, and secondly, the substantial quantity of enemy intelligence gathered.[41] When 2RM made landfall, one of its first and most important objectives, as has already been detailed, was to seize Gerlach's residence/office (see figure eleven). Colonel Sturges suspected that many sensitive documents were being contained within.[42] He could not, it transpired, have been more correct. On arrival, whilst Gerlach tried to stall for time, his wife and daughters attempted to burn sensitive documents in their bathtub.[43] Fortunately, the Marines had foreseen this eventuality and thus equipped themselves with fire extinguishers, which they used.[44] Although many sensitive documents were destroyed, over

[38] D. F. Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon: Britain and Iceland in the World War Two Era* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1983), p. 46.

[39] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, Howard-Smith to Halifax, 29 May 1940.

[40] *Ibid*., p. 3.

[41] The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entries, 10-19 May 1940.

[42] R. B. Lockhart, *The Marines Were There: The Story of the Royal Marines in the Second World War* (London: Putnam, 1950), p. 34.

[43] *Ibid*.

[44] *Ibid*.

half survived.[45] Some, it should be noted, contained disturbing information which confirmed London's suspicions that Berlin intended to take control (see figure twelve).[46] As a result, the British invasion and occupation of Iceland had, albeit through British eyes, been justified.

These actions, for all their positive results, do not put across the bigger picture that is Operation *Fork*. They constitute a positive veneer of shining successes that hide what was, ultimately, an inherently flawed enterprise. It would be very wrong to suggest that *Fork* preserved Icelandic freedoms and secured Allied interests in Northern Europe. There are, as shall now be detailed, two reasons for this unpleasant truth.

Firstly, and most obviously, *Fork* flagrantly breached Iceland's neutrality.[47] No political spin could disguise this fact. Since inception of the 1918 Dano-Icelandic Act of Union, Iceland had maintained a state of splendid isolation where pacifism, along with independence, was fiercely upheld.[48] Its people wanted to be left alone, as was their right.[49] Secondly, and most importantly, *Fork*, whilst forged from righteous intentions, was poorly prepared. Had events transpired differently, had German forces descended on Iceland during 10-19 May 1940, its outcome would certainly have been disastrous. Indeed, hundreds of dead and/or captured Marines and Icelanders is not an unrealistic prediction.

The first facet of *Fork* which failed to reach a war winning standard was organisation. Whilst this issue could not have been averted – threats posed from German descent, as has

[45] The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 10 May 1940, 05:20.

[46] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 15.

[47] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, Howard-Smith to Stefánsson, 16 May 1940, pp. 1-3.

[48] It should be understood that this statement has been formulated through the analysis of five different sources, not one. P. A. Coggin, *The British Occupation of Iceland* (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, c. 2009), p. 15 discusses Iceland's attempt to re-isolate itself following ratification of the 1918 Dano-Icelandic Act of Union. The National Archives, FO 371/24778, Howe to anonymous, 11 April 1940 and S. B. J. Hardarson, 'The "Republic of Iceland" 1940-1944: Anglo-American Attitudes and Influences', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 9 (1974), p. 28 discusses Iceland's wish to remain free from armed conflict. E. Linklater, *The Northern Garrisons* (London: HMSO, 1941), p. 24 and Lockhart, *The Marines Were There*, p. 35 discusses Iceland's determination to remain independent.

[49] L. Roberts, 'They Never Had Seen a Soldier', *The Saturday Evening Post*, 213 (1940), p. 87.

already been demonstrated, were only fully appreciated just days before countermeasures were implemented – any fallout that resulted should nevertheless be taken into consideration.

When Colonel Sturges commenced his journey to take command of 2RM at Greenock, he had no idea where, or in what situation, they would end up.[50] This information, reveals Bittner, was made clearer at Euston Railway Station, the place Colonel Sturges received his orders in writing.[51] Major Humphrey Quill, commanding officer of a small intelligence detachment, fared no better.[52] He and his men had two hours with which to halt their work on Far Eastern matters and to prepare themselves for disembarkation and fresh assignments alongside 2RM.[53] Under ideal circumstances, the British military would have provided as much notice as possible for its senior officers before they undertook an operational command.[54] Unfortunately, throughout 'crisis and wartime',[55] writes Bob Bushaway, 'this [utopian scenario] was rarely possible'.[56] Situations such as that experienced by Colonel Sturges and Major Quill 'would not have been unusual'.[57] After all, quick decision making was a facility expected of all officers.[58] Having said that, and as shall be detailed in due course, no one could deny the benefits Colonel Sturges and Major Quill would have gained had they received an extra 24 hours.

[50] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 41.

[51] *Ibid*.

[52] *Ibid*.

[53] *Ibid*.

[54] B. Bushaway to P. W. Deans (unpublished correspondence, 6 August 2012).

[55] *Ibid*.

[56] *Ibid*.

[57] *Ibid*.

[58] *Ibid*.

Intelligence, writes John Patrick Finnegan, is 'the collection of information by commanders on the enemy and the battlefield environment they must confront'.[59] Unfortunately for Colonel Sturges, nobody in Major Quill's detachment, including Major Quill himself, spoke either German or Icelandic, so it was absolutely impossible for Colonel Sturges to obtain intelligence that was guaranteed to be impartial or completely trustworthy.[60] Carl von Clausewitz, in his definitive work *On War*, comments on this very issue: 'What is required of an officer [to distinguish legitimate intelligence from illegitimate intelligence] is a certain power of discrimination, which only knowledge of men and things and good judgement can give.'[61] No knowledge of German or Icelandic would have rendered much of 2RM's intelligence as useless or open to misinterpretation.

Whilst at sea, Colonel Sturges held a conference onboard HMS *Berwick*.[62] During this conference, which was attended only by officers, 2RM's destination, mission and plan of attack were established.[63] This conference also served as an opportunity to evaluate what intelligence had already been assembled. The amount, it transpired, was very little; only three maps – one of Iceland, one of the Reykjavík area, and one of Reykjavík itself – could be found.[64] These master copies had to be duplicated by each platoon commander. Furthermore, making matters worse, the latter map, the one of Reykjavík itself, had been drawn from memory.[65] As a result, due to its inaccuracies, considerable 'confusion'[66] arose

[59] J. P. Finnegan, *Military Intelligence* (Washington: US Army Centre of Military History, 1998), p. 3.

[60] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 41.

[61] C. von Clausewitz, *On War* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1997), p. 64

.

[62] The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 8 May 1940, 03:45.

[63] *Ibid*.

[64] *Ibid*.

[65] *Ibid*.

[66] *Ibid*.

'among companies on landing.'[67] Quite why senior Admiralty personnel ordered 2RM into battle with just three maps, for that is what effectively happened, remains unclear. None of the sources, both primary and secondary, are able to provide an answer. It probably resulted from insufficient preparation time.

On top of all hitherto mentioned difficulties, as if proceedings could not get any worse, 2RM was late sailing.[68] This delay had been attributed to three reasons: the tardy arrival of certain unspecified supplies, the lack of dock space and loading facilities, and a shortage of, what is perceived be, lighters, misspelt in Colonel Sturges' report as 'lighhers'.[69] Demonstrating, perhaps, 2RM's desperation, any supplies that remained unloaded by 03:00 on 8 May 1940 were discarded forthwith: 'What was left ashore at this time',[70] wrote Colonel Sturges, 'was unknown but in view of the […] [desired] time of arrival at REYKJAVIK, it was decided to sail with the stores which were on board and hope that no essentials were left on shore.'[71]

The second facet of *Fork* which failed to reach a war winning standard was the composition of the force itself. On a scale of one to ten, with ten representing *effective* and one representing *ineffective*, 2RM should score somewhere between one and four. It was a force, still in development, a force at point of deployment, wholly unprepared.

Whilst the senior officers and senior non-commissioned officers of 2RM were veteran servicemen, the main body of soldiers – the junior officers, junior non-commissioned officers and Marines – were new recruits.[72] If these new recruits had been fully trained, knowledge

[67] The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 8 May 1940, 03:45.

[68] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, Howard-Smith to Halifax, 29 May 1940, p. 1.

[69] The National Archives, ADM 202/400, 'Letter of Proceedings', 27 May 1940, p. 1.

[70] *Ibid*.

[71] *Ibid*.

[72] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 41.

gained through lessons in military theory and through practice manoeuvres would, undoubtedly, have partly offset a lack in experience of real-time combat situations. Unfortunately, these new recruits, as shall now be detailed, had not been fully trained.[73] Prior to embarkation, 2RM's activities focussed predominantly on physical conditioning, improving discipline, and installing a small amount of tactical knowledge.[74] Therefore, none of the Marines had qualified with either the Lee Enfield bolt-action rifle or Bren light machine gun.[75] To make matters worse, fifty Marines had never even fired a weapon.[76] This issue was attributed, predominantly, to a lack of available firing ranges on which the Marines could practice.[77] In laconic fashion, the whole disastrous situation is summarised by 2RM's war diarist: 'The men are only partially trained. There were no war stores and there was a shortage of weapons.'[78]

Whilst at sea, weapons were finally issued to every soldier in 2RM.[79] These weapons – Lee Enfields, the British military's principle bolt-action rifle; Brens, the British military's principle light machine gun; anti-tank rifles; and 2" mortars – were brand-new and completely un-calibrated.[80] Consequently, not only would the Marines have just forty-eight hours to familiarise themselves with these previously unused weapons, they would also have to calibrate and fine-tune them, practise operating them and make-ready them for use in anger

[73] The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 3 May 1940, 19:30.

[74] *Ibid*., 1 April 1940.

[75] *Ibid*.

[76] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 42.

[77] The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 1 April 1940.

[78] *Ibid*., 3 May 1940, 19:30.

[79] *Ibid*., 9 May 1940.

[80] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 42 and P. Doyle, *The British Soldier of the Second World War* (Botley: Shire Publications, 2009), pp. 13-14.

immediately on landing.[81] Needless to say, a cramped and crowded ship is not the most suitable place to be making such hasty preparations. In addition, 2RM, having only been activated during April 1940, was required on its voyage to learn how to operate as a cohesive unit; this method of working would be critical when facing potentially hostile Icelanders and, more importantly, German forces.[82]

It was not only 2RM's handheld weapons that were unprepared for combat, its heavy support weapons possessed similar issues. To help win against an expected German attack – one which, as shall soon be detailed, appeared insurmountable – a collective of artillery pieces – two 3.7 inch howitzers, each with 100 rounds of ammunition; four 2 pdr. pom pom anti-aircraft guns, each with 2000 rounds of ammunition per barrel; and two 4 inch coastal defence guns, each with 150 rounds of ammunition – accompanied the Marines.[83] Whilst Roberts does make reference to these in his article on *Fork*, he does not make reference to their ineffectiveness, a state brought about by a lack of communications equipment, a lack of searchlights and a lack of directors.[84] In addition, compounding this unfortunate situation further, the artillerymen charged with manning and operating 2RM's howitzers, pom poms and coastal defence guns had, for reasons unknown, never shot them.[85] Moreover, nobody could be sure if any would in fact work.[86]

[81] The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 9 May 1940.

[82] *Ibid*., 1 April 1940.

[83] The National Archives, ADM 202/400, report on the proceedings of HMS Berwick, HMS Glasgow, HMS Fearless, and HMS Fortune throughout 7-11 May 1940, p. 1.

[84] Roberts, 'They Never Had Seen a Soldier', *The Saturday Earning Post*, p. 20 and The Royal Marines Museum Archive, ARCH 7/19/18, 'Notes for a lecture given by Colonel F. P. Pym to the officers of Stonehouse Barracks after the War, but taken from notes prepared for a lecture by Major General A. N. Williams, C. B. E., RM' (hereafter Lecture Notes), information in sub-section entitled 'State of the Artillery'.

[85] The Royal Marines Museum Archive, ARCH 7/19/18, Lecture Notes, information in sub-section entitled 'State of the Artillery'.

[86] *Ibid*.

So, in summary, 2RM consisted predominantly of young, inexperienced and untrained Marines. None of these Marines had qualified with their designated weapons; fifty had never even fired a weapon. 2RM's artillerymen were particularly unfit to wage war; they were few in number, short of ammunition and had never even operated the type of guns allocated for their mission. Thus far, through unbiased analysis, this dissertation has established and examined the events that transpired on 10 May 1940, the state of preparedness of Operation *Fork*, and the standard and quality of 2RM. A change in approach, however, ensues.

Whilst Iceland, when compared with other theatres of conflict during the Second World War, represents an unusually bloodless and non-destructive one, it should be noted that such an outcome had not been expected, particularly before or during the initial days, weeks and months. As a result, this dissertation shall now establish and examine the opposition forces 2RM was thought most likely to confront.

There were two phases to *Fork's* potential body of conflict. The first phase would have occurred on the day of the invasion, 10 May 1940, and would have comprised of a British attack against an Icelandic and German defence.[87] As has already been detailed, following a lengthy disarmament programme, Iceland was, by the twentieth century, generally averse to military hardware. This mind set, however, did not spread to its small but well equipped police force; its seventy officers were heavily armed with rifles, revolvers and tear gas.[88] Whilst Colonel Sturges and other senior Admiralty personnel thought that fighting would not break out against Chief of Police Kofoed-Hansen and his officers – 'it is believed they are not in a position to put up any resistance',[89] wrote an anonymous person – this eventuality could not, unfortunately, be ruled out: 'It will be necessary to land in the face of

[87] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, untitled memorandum. This four page document is easily identifiable. It is marked on the first three pages by the heading 'Travellers' Club, Pall Mall, S.W.1.' No date is issued. The anonymous person is thought to be Howard-Smith.

[88] The National Archives, AIR 40/1375, Bowering to anonymous, 14 April 1940.

[89] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, untitled memorandum, p. 2.

the ill will of the Govt. and possible opposition of such forces as they can bring against us'.[90] After all, as has already been detailed, Kofoed-Hansen was a suspected Nazi sympathiser, his officers were armed, and all Icelanders were fiercely independent. Simultaneously, the German residents, who by 1940 numbered approximately 200, were also thought capable of staging some form of armed resistance.[91] There was, however, less certainty as to this likelihood: 'We do not know',[92] continued the aforementioned person, 'what arms […] [they might] have.'[93]

The second phase would have occurred during the ensuing days following the invasion, 11-19 May 1940, and would have comprised of a German attack against a British defence. This engagement was not only predicted to occur, it was predicted to occur on a scale, arguably, hitherto unseen during this most recent spate of Anglo-German hostilities:

> [Whilst at sea, it was made known] that German troop-carrying aircraft and […] [parachute troops] were likely to arrive after the Germans had heard of our landing and that a force of 50,000 Germans was waterborne on the River Elbe ready to move – possibly to Iceland.[94]

After analysing the Icelandic police and the German residents, reason would suggest that the first phase would not have prevented 2RM from, firstly, making a successful landing on Iceland, and secondly, establishing its authority over local residents. Granted, 2RM was untrained and in possession of some potentially sub-standard equipment. Its prospective

[90] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, untitled memorandum, p. 4.

[91] *Ibid*.

[92] *Ibid*.

[93] *Ibid*.

[94] The Royal Marines Museum Archive, ARCH 7/19/18, Lecture Notes, p. 4.

opponents, however, were deficient in strength. Ultimately, sheer weight of numbers would have facilitated 2RM in prevailing over any and every group that posed a threat. Only one question remains: at what cost? There is no information in both the primary and secondary sources that directly details, or alludes to, the competency of the Icelandic police. Its officers may have been highly unfamiliar with their weapons; alternatively, of course, they may have been highly proficient with them. As has already been detailed, Kofoed-Hansen visited Germany to observe police training methods. This knowledge would suggest that he was at least keen to field an effective contingent of officers. All things considered – leadership, armament, psyche and training – it remains a distinct possibility that, had every officer made a stand, the Icelandic police would have inflicted 2RM with seriously a bloody nose. There is also no information in both the primary and secondary sources that directly details, or alludes to, the competency of the German residents. Whilst most were civilians with little or no military experience, sixty-two were shipwrecked sailors from the *Bahia Blanca*, a merchant ship that sank after hitting an iceberg on 10 January 1940.[95] Had these men been armed and had they fought in coalition with, or separately to, the Icelandic police, they would also likely have caused 2RM some notable damage.

Whereas the first phase would have presented 2RM with a challenging opponent, one that could, arguably, only be overcome through loss of life, the second phase would have presented 2RM with an undefeatable opponent, a substantial force that could easily have crushed 2RM and fulfilled Hitler's prophecy: '[The Führer stated that] within ten days',[96] writes Robert Bruce Lockhart, 'not a single British soldier would be left in Iceland.'[97] Unlike the Icelandic police and the German residents, there is plenty of information in both the

[95] The National Archives, AIR 40/1375, Bowering to anonymous, 15 April 1940 and R. Jordan, *The World's Merchant Fleets, 1939: The Particulars and Wartime Fates of 6,000 Ships* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2006), p. 67.

[96] Lockhart, *The Marines Were There*, p. 35.

[97] *Ibid*.

primary and secondary sources that directly details, or alludes to, the competency of the German army. It makes chilling reading. Firstly, at a most elementary level, the German army was in excellent physical condition.[98] This feature and its implications had been studied and made all too aware within British military circles:

> Germany believes that a reason for failure in the last war was that her soldiers were not physically as fit as the British soldiers. Even before the advent of the Nazi regime a nation-wide scheme of physical training was inaugurated; all youths were graded accorded to the standards they reached. The Nazis made membership of the Hitler youth compulsory. In this organization physical training and marching became compulsory. After passing through the Hitler youth a boy joins the Labour Service where physical fitness, marching, and all form of outdoor exercises were carried out. Thus we are now faced by fighting forces composed of supremely fit men who have been trained to undergo great physical strain. Any shortage of food or under-nourishment is to a large extent offset by this.[99]

Whilst this appraisal might seem a little sensationalistic and at risk of portraying Germany's soldiers as superhuman, which they of course were not, its fundamental point is nonetheless credible. Wehrmacht personnel were physically strong, an attribute which allowed them, with the right training, to operate under strenuous conditions.[100] Secondly, the German army

[98] The National Archives, WO 176/287, 'Alabaster Force Intelligence Summery No. 11', 14 August 1940, p. 2.

[99] *Ibid*. For a brief appraisal as to the formation of the Hitler Youth and the Labour Service and for a first-hand account of the conditions whilst working within the Labour Service, see U. Steinhilper and P. Osborne, *Spitfire on My Tail: A View from the Other Side* (Keston: Independent Books, 1990), pp. 32 and 40-44 respectively.

[100] The National Archives, WO 176/287, 'Alabaster Force Intelligence Summery No. 11', 14 August 1940, p. 2 and D. Stone, *Hitler's Army: The Men, Machines, and Organization, 1939-1945* (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2009), p. 77.

had an arsenal of innovative, deadly and, strictly speaking, illegal weapons.[101] Prior to achieving power, before 1933, plans for an intensive programme of rearmament had taken up a significant part of the Nazi's military policy.[102] On achieving power, these plans were put into effect.[103] 'Coming at a time when other countries were more inclined to reduce their military expenditures',[104] writes Gerhard L. Weinberg, 'the German armament programme would change the balance of currently available military power'.[105] This programme was initially undertaken in secret; Hitler did not want his nation to be suspected of breaking any restrictions imposed on it at Versailles.[106] As war loomed closer, however, developments in air, armoured and chemical warfare; the expansion of the Kriegsmarine; the creation of the Luftwaffe; and conscription, could no longer be concealed.[107] Essentially, writes David Stone, 'the German army that went to war in 1939 was indeed "an army such as the world had never seen" (to quote Hitler), with soldiers who were thoroughly trained, well motivated, physically robust, well managed and justifiably confident both in themselves and their national leaders'[108] – a near complete opposite of 2RM.

When considering the above essential points, it is clear that the British invasion and the first nineteen days of occupation did very little, if anything, to preserve Icelandic freedoms and secure Allied interests in Northern Europe. *Fork* flagrantly breached Iceland's neutrality; it embroiled Iceland into a war that could have been avoided. It put Iceland at

[101] The National Archives, WO 176/287, 'Alabaster Force Intelligence Summery No. 11', 14 August 1940, pp. 1-2.

[102] G. L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 23.

[103] *Ibid.*

[104] *Ibid.*

[105] *Ibid.*

[106] *Ibid.*

[107] *Ibid.*

[108] Stone, *Hitler's Army*, p. 77.

tremendous risk of invasion by Germany. If Britain wanted aspects of its military to be stationed in Iceland, despite the potential consequences, it had an obligation to send a preliminary force that had received adequate training and equipment. By orchestrating Operation *Fork* as described and by sending the ill prepared 2RM, this obligation was not met. Operation *Fork* had been poorly prepared, rendering it liable to fail with the slightest of opposition. 2RM was in a very poor state; it was poorly trained and poorly equipped. Most importantly, the opponents that 2RM had been predicted to face were by far superior in strength of numbers and fire power. Ultimately, if 2RM's purpose was to improve Britain's security by preventing a German invasion of Iceland, its very presence in Iceland risked provoking a German invasion. After all, the fact that Britain was motivated enough to station a force in Iceland was the ultimate demonstration of its strategic importance. A fundamental review of policy would be required to achieve long term security.

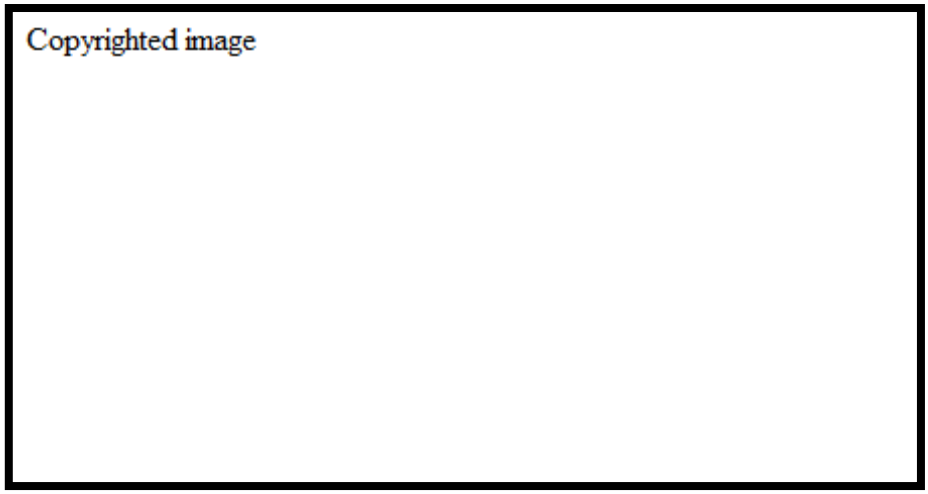

Figure Four[109] – 'Reykjavík was sighted during a brief snowstorm, well lit up. The troops had been fallen in for some time, considerable unsteadiness was evident owing to sea-sickness'.[110]

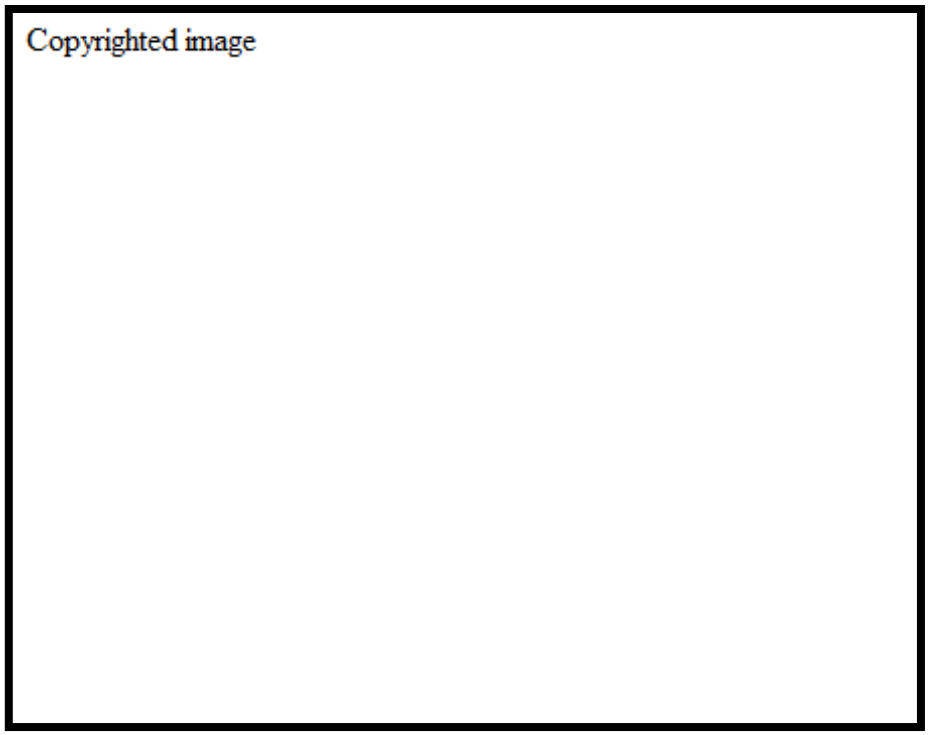

Figure Five[111] – 'HMS *Fearless* came alongside but little or no provision had been made for transferring the troops quickly, the gangways were narrow, slippery for a fully equipped man, and totally insufficient in number.'[112]

[109] Þ. Whitehead, *Ísland í hers höndum* (Reykjavík: Vaka-Helgafell, 2002), p. 10.

[110] The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 10 May 1940, 05:00.

[111] Whitehead, *Ísland í hers höndum*, p. 10.

[112] The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 10 May 1940, 05:00.

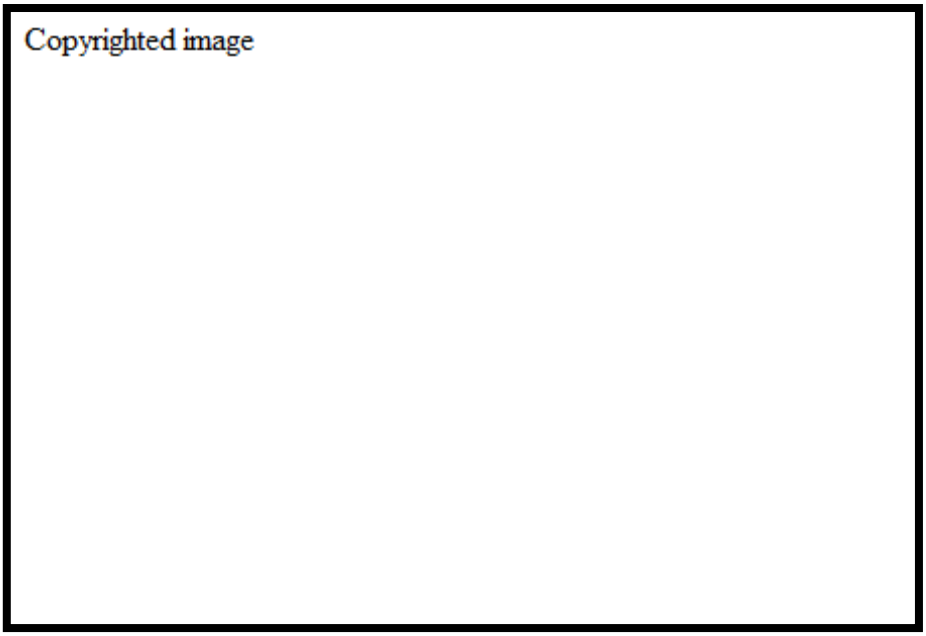

Figure Six[113] – 'Dour Icelandic men and their handsome women lined the quayside to watch the first landing of troops since the first settlers arrived, almost eleven centuries ago. No demonstration occurred, either of welcome or of displeasure.'[114]

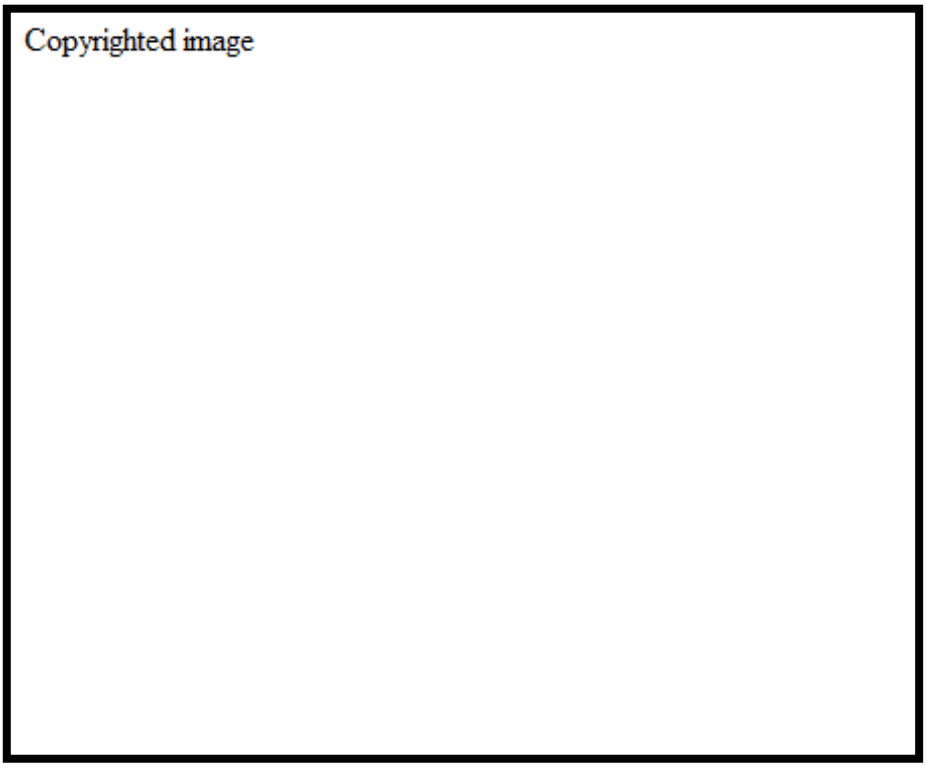

Figure Severn[115] – 'At 11:00, I [(front left)] proceeded to the Government building accompanied by Mr. Shepherd [(front right)], Mr. Harris [(back right)], and Mr. Fortescue [(hidden from view)].'[116]

[113] Whitehead, *Ísland í hers höndum*, p. 19.

[114] L. Roberts, 'They Never Had Seen a Soldier', *The Saturday Earning Post*, 213 (1940), p. 20

[115] Whitehead, *Ísland í hers höndum*, p. 20.

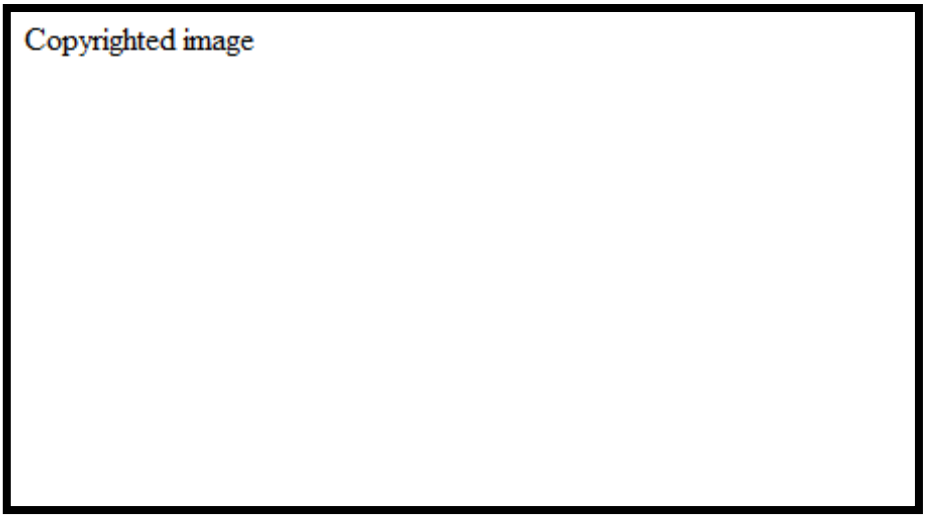

Figure Eight[117] – 'The Ministers listened to my statement attentively, and at its conclusion the Prime Minister [(centre)] replied briefly to the effect that the Icelandic Government must maintain the attitude they had adopted in April. Whatever His Majesty's Government might think, they for their part did not believe that the Germans would have made a descent upon the island.'[118]

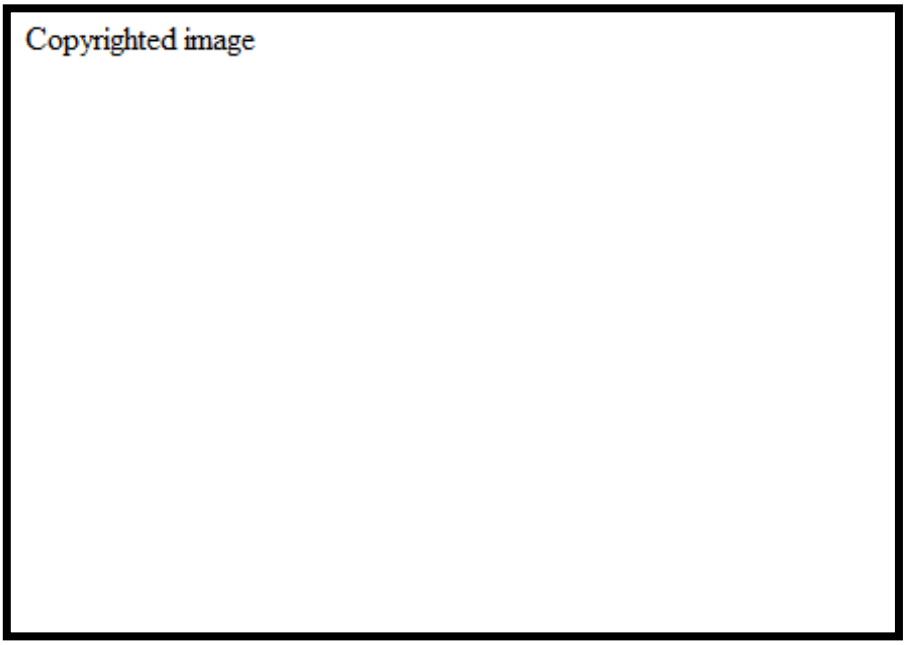

Figure Nine[119] – 'He is a very nice man to talk to, most polite, and very interested in Iceland and Icelandic affaires.'[120]

[116] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, Howard-Smith to Halifax, 29 May 1940, p. 2.

[117] Whitehead, *Ísland í hers höndum*, p. 20.

[118] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, Howard-Smith to Halifax, 29 May 1940, p. 2.

[119] Whitehead, *Ísland í hers höndum*, p. 12.

[120] The National Archives, FO 371/23638, unidentified individual to Collier, 30 August 1939.

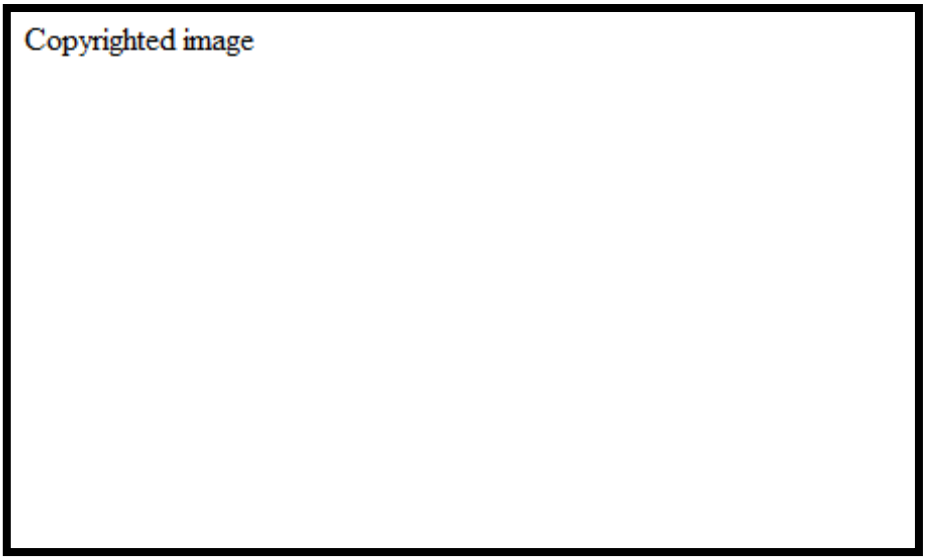

Figure Ten[121] – 'The Germans are taken out to a waiting car. There is a small crowed outside. Sentries surround the house. The German staff is driven away.'[122]

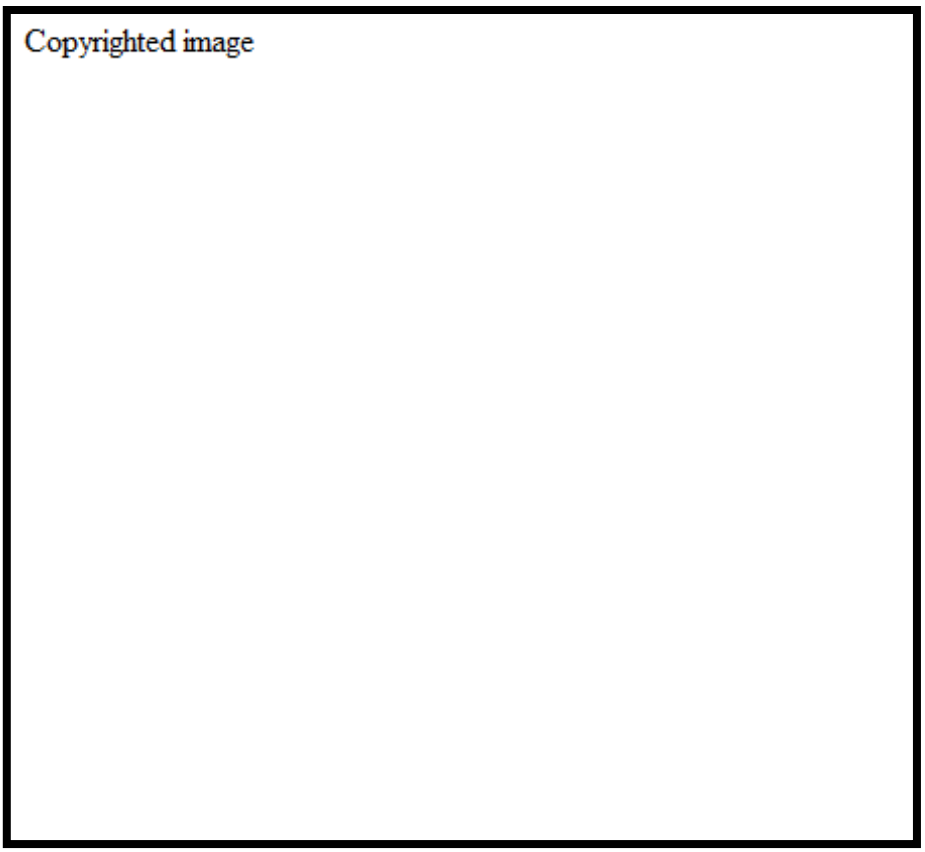

Figure Eleven[123] – 'A British soldier unscrews the scarlet plate with the black swastika and takes it down.'[124]

[121] Whitehead, *Ísland í hers höndum*, p. 13.

[122] Shepherd, 'Zero Hour', in *Iceland Presents*, p. 22.

[123] Whitehead, *Ísland í hers höndum*, p. 13.

[124] Shepherd, 'Zero Hour', in *Iceland Presents*, p. 22.

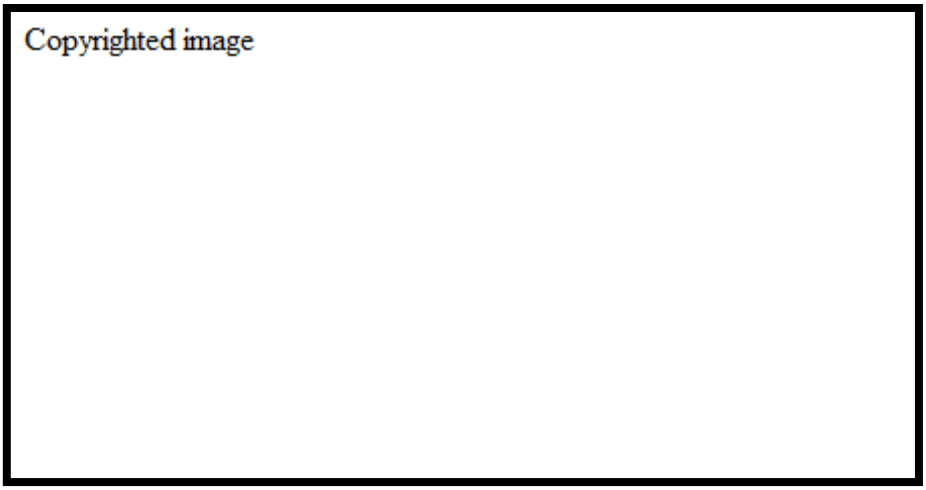

Figure Twelve[125] – 'Our second night was spent in the German consulate, where we had to go through endless papers. Signed photographs of Himmler, Goebbels, and Göering looked down on us.'[126]

[125] Whitehead, *Ísland í hers höndum*, p. 14.

[126] A. Macnaghten, *Vigil in Iceland: A Fragment of Autobiography, 1940-1942* (Slough: Chas Luff, 1977), p. 17.

Chapter Two: Occupation, 20 May 1940-22 April 1942

Where Operation *Fork* failed to preserve Icelandic freedoms and secure Allied interests in Northern Europe, the wider course of the European conflict would lead to a fundamental change in British policy towards Iceland, reversing this outcome. On 20 May 1940, nineteen days after invading and occupying Iceland, 2nd Royal Marine Battalion was relieved by 147th Infantry Brigade (hereafter *Alabaster*).[1] Like its predecessor, *Alabaster* was severely underequipped and in no position to defend a whole county.[2] Indeed, all calls for sufficient reinforcements had fallen on deaf ears whilst events in mainland Europe spiralled out of control.[3] On 23 May 1940, Field Marshal Alan Brooke, 1st Viscount Alanbrooke, wrote a sombre entry into his diary: 'Nothing […] can save the BEF now'.[4] Indicative, perhaps, of Iceland's secondary importance up until this point, Edward Wood, 1st Earl of Halifax and Britain's Foreign Minister, enquired during a cabinet meeting whether 'it would […] be better to withdraw at once, while there is yet time, a force which appears to be ineffective'.[5] This proposal, however, was strongly rebuffed.[6] With France's eventual capitulation, Britain found itself surrounded on three sides.[7] Whilst hostile German forces occupied Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and northern France, neutral Irish

[1] The National Archives, ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 20 May 1940.

[2] The National Archives, AIR 40/1375, Howard-Smith to anonymous, 24 May 1940.

[3] A. Danchev and D. Todman, eds., *War Diaries, 1939-1945: Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke* (London: Phoenix Press, 2002), pp. 67-85.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 67.

[5] The National Archives, CAB 80/12, 'Iceland: Note by Joint Planning Sub-Committee submitting a Draft Report', 30 May 1940.

[6] *Ibid*., 'Iceland: Report', 31 May 1940, p. 1.

[7] G. L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1127-1128.

forces occupied southern Ireland.[8] This difficult situation required Britain to adopt a new policy towards Iceland, one that would strengthen its defences there.[9] Major General H. L. Davis explains why:

> German seizure of Iceland would have closed the North-west Approaches just as effectively as their seizure of France had done to the South-western Approach. The result would have been the forced capitulation of Britain due to starvation within a very brief time.[10]

Senior military personnel quickly appreciated the strategic importance of Iceland.[11] As a result, they dramatically increased Britain's military presence and investment in military infrastructure.[12] The following analysis shall ascertain the results of this inward investment, both the positive and negative outcomes. It shall also analyse the social and political relationships that grew between both parties. The analysis shall start from an Icelandic perspective and shall finish on a British perspective. It shall demonstrate that, once the initial question of island security had been addressed, mutual benefit was predominant and easily obtainable. It shall also demonstrate that Anglo-Icelandic relations remained cordial despite disagreements on conduct. In all, the analysis shall demonstrate that, throughout 20 May 1940-22 April 1942, Icelandic freedoms were largely preserved and Allied interests were completely secured.

---

[8] Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, pp. 1127-1128.

[9] The National Archives, CAB 80/12, 'Iceland: Strength of Garrison', 11 June 1940.

[10] D. F. Bittner, 'A Final Appraisal of the British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-1942', *The RUSI Journal*, 120 (1975), p. 47, cited from Major General H. L. Davis to D. F. Bittner (unpublished correspondence, 1 July 1970).

[11] The National Archives, CAB 80/12, 'Iceland: Report', 31 May 1940, p. 1.

[12] *Ibid*.

It had been long held within the Foreign Office that the Icelander was more influenced by consideration for his or her pocket than by anything else.[13] Whilst undeniably shocking, this documented view depicts, rather unsympathetically, a genuine state of affairs. Iceland had been experiencing, over several successive years, serious and prolonged economic difficulties.[14] The fishing catches had been appalling – a problem first perceived during 1934 – and, compounding matters further, the best markets had been lost.[15] Money was very tight.[16] Therefore, to induce co-operation, Whitehall proposed that Britain should accept all of Iceland's exports – predominantly fish, contributing approximately 90%, meat and wool.[17] Whilst this gesture may seem generous, it represents, in reality, nothing more or less than a mutually beneficial deal, if not a moral obligation. By invading, Britain had severed Iceland from many of its European trading partners; terrible consequences would befall the island, similar to those experienced throughout 1807-1810, if these losses were not offset.[18]

When *Alabaster* arrived on 19 May 1940, so did numerous employment opportunities. 'The forces, having much work to be done,'[19] writes William Charles Chamberlin, 'offered high wages in order to secure the requisite labour.'[20] As shall now be detailed, there was a

[13] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, minute by Howard-Smith, 2 May 1940, p. 1.

[14] W. C. Chamberlin, *Economic Development of Iceland through World War II* (New York: AMS Press, 1968), p. 85.

[15] *Ibid*. and The National Archives, FO 371/19429, 'Denmark and Iceland: Annual Report, 1934', 19 January 1935, p. 48.

[16] Chamberlin, *Economic Development of Iceland through World War II*, pp. 86-87.

[17] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, minute by Howard-Smith, 2 May 1940, p. 1; The National Archives, FO 115/3722, Lothian to Hull, 10 May 1940, p. 2; and G. Hálfdanarson, *Historical Dictionary of Iceland* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2008), s.v. ECONOMY.

[18] D. F. Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon: Britain an Iceland in the World War II Era* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1983), p. 90.

[19] Chamberlin, *Economic Development of Iceland through World War II*, p. 96.

[20] *Ibid*.

very important reason for this decision. In addition to defending Iceland, *Alabaster* had been charged with developing air and naval bases at several key locations.[21] These bases, including the necessary infrastructure such as roads, bridges, accommodation blocks and mess halls, required constructing. Therefore, to ensure individual projects would be delivered on time, a mass recruitment programme, one targeted at Iceland's unemployed, was instigated (see figure thirteen).[22] This influx of employment opportunities produced a very positive result; after February 1941, the Althing ceased publication of its monthly unemployment report.[23] Indeed, such projects not only provided Icelanders with highly paid and regular work, they also provided, writes Chamberlin, 'capital improvements'[24] – public facilities were either created or upgraded. This mass mobilisation, however, caused a labour shortage throughout 1941; too much, it would appear, was being attempted.[25] Strikes over wages that had not tracked inflation rates also caused some problems.[26] Consequently, during May that year, the military authorities, following suggestions made by the Althing, recruited 250 men from the Faroe archipelago, a collection of impoverished Danish islands under British protection situated between Iceland and Norway.[27]

The requirement of the British military to pay for services crucial to its occupation represents another area where the Icelandic economy grew throughout 1940-1942. This situation arose because the Icelandic government, in a bid to maintain its neutrality, made

[21] The National Archives, AIR 40/1375, Howard-Smith to anonymous, 23 May 1940 and The National Archives, FO 371/32750, Howard-Smith to Eden, 22 June 1942, p. 1.

[22] Chamberlin, *Economic Development of Iceland through World War II*, p. 96.

[23] The National Archives, FO 371/32767, 'Annual Report on Iceland for the Year 1941', 16 March 1942, p. 18.

[24] Chamberlin, *Economic Development of Iceland through World War II*, p. 97.

[25] The National Archives, FO 371/32767, 'Annual Report on Iceland for the Year 1941', 16 March 1942, p. 11.

[26] *Ibid*.

[27] The National Archives, FO 371/32767, 'Annual Report on Iceland for the Year 1941', 16 March 1942, p. 11 and Lockhart, *The Marines Were There*, pp. 32-33.

sure that no state sponsored assistance of any kind was made available – payment for use of island facilities would be negotiated between the occupiers and the respective companies responsible.[28] What is more, no alternative option, other than acquiring these services through force, presented itself. Whilst payment for use of Reykjavík harbour by Royal Navy warships represents one good example, payment for use of Iceland's telephone system – the principle method of quick communication – represents another, better example.[29] When a relatively small force, such as *Alabaster*, guards a relatively large island, such as Iceland, its commander cannot guarantee that sufficient troops have been deployed throughout every district in order to repel an invasion; the force will be weak and thinly spread, albeit entrenched.[30] Therefore, reliable lines of communication – telegraphy, telephony and radio, for example – become vitally important; they ensure that, should enemy units attack, reinforcements can be summoned with haste.[31] On Iceland, *Alabaster* did not possess reliable lines of communication in great numbers, so it utilised the island's domestic telephone service – at a cost.[32] To this end, if coastal lookout stations witnessed anything suspicious, their reports would be charged at normal commercial rates.[33]

There were other benefits that Iceland gained from its period of occupation, and whilst they, arguably, did not possess any economic value, they did possess some practical application. These benefits resulted from, what can only be described as, sustained social investment, i.e. goodwill gestures. The University of Iceland (hereafter UoI) had, during 1940, completed a new building in Reykjavík, one that could utilise fossil fuel to generate

[28] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, Howard-Smith to Halifax, 16 June 1940, p. 1.

[29] The National Archives, ADM 199/699, Collier to Howard-Smith, 28 June 1940 and Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 89.

[30] C. von Clausewitz, *On War* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1997), pp. 279-280.

[31] *Ibid*., pp. 274-275.

[32] The National Archives, WO 176/287, 'Alabaster Force Operation Order No. 2', 1 July 1940.

[33] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 89.

warmth.[34] This method, however, was prohibitively expensive; coal prices, for example, hovered on or just below 150 krónur per ton.[35] Consequently, in response to considerable budgetary restraints, UoI had, simultaneously, devised a new and far more cost-effective central heating system, one that would utilise naturally occurring steam from local volcanic springs.[36] Such phenomena, it turns out, can be found all over Iceland.[37] To complete this latter project, an order for some specially designed pipes had been placed in Germany.[38] Unfortunately, following Iceland's unplanned entry into hostilities, all hitherto unfulfilled orders associated with Axis powers, including the pipes, were rendered unobtainable. They sat on transport ships, built, but unable to leave.[39] This complication produced a very serious issue for UoI; hard economic times had made financing enough coal for one year impossible, rendering the building unusable.[40] Cold weather too, was not far away. Therefore, whilst diplomatic efforts to secure these pipes, spearheaded by Charles Howard-Smith, got underway, the Admiralty donated 250-300 tons of coal from its Reykjavík depot, enough for one calendar year.[41] Further examples of social investment were both diverse and numerous. These included the provision of public, and often free, entertainment events for all Icelanders, the provision of Christmas parties and gifts for all Icelandic children, and the flying of

[34] The National Archives, ADM 199/699, Howard-Smith to Collier, 19 June 1940.

[35] *Ibid*.

[36] *Ibid*., minute by Waldash, 4 June 1940.

[37] W. R. Mead, 'Renaissance of Iceland', *Economic Geography*, 21 (1945), p. 140.

[38] The National Archives, ADM 199/699, minute by Waldash, 4 June 1940.

[39] *Ibid*.

[40] The National Archives, ADM 199/699, Howard-Smith to Collier, 19 June 1940.

[41] Whilst not directly confirmed, it would appear from the primary sources within sub-folder M012785/40 of ADM 199/699 that such an outcome did occur. Indeed, both the Foreign Office and Admiralty were keen advocates, demonstrating so during various telegrams and minutes dated 19 June and 30 July 1940 and 4, 9, 12, and 15 July 1940 respectively. On 13 August 1940, senior Treasury personnel refused to 'sanction [a] free gift' but instead agreed that 250-300 tons of coal could be provided from Admiralty stocks at two pounds sterling per ton. This cost was presumably borne by either the Foreign Office or Admiralty, totalling no more than 600 pounds sterling. Bittner, in *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 93, interprets events similarly.

Iceland's national flag on public military parades.[42] Such actions were very important. Firstly, they benefited the Icelanders materially, and secondly, they demonstrated that their occupiers cared for them.[43]

Moving on from the material benefits gained, there were other aspects of Britain's conduct in Iceland that neither enriched nor depleted life for the local inhabitants; these aspects would help to preserve the status quo. Before *Alabaster* relieved 2nd Royal Marine Battalion, each soldier was issued with a leaflet entitled 'Ten Commandments for British Troops in Iceland'[44] (see appendix). This leaflet set out the parameters of *Alabaster's* behaviour, the dos and don'ts of each serving individual. 'Don't forget',[45] stated commandment one, 'that this is the first time that British troops have landed in Iceland: we represent the British Empire and it is by our behaviour, discipline, and bearing that the British will be judged.'[46] It was an all encompassing collection of guidelines, the soldiers were told to respect the Icelandic residences that they would be temporally billeted in; to learn about the Icelanders before judging them; to conduct themselves in a far more polite manner than usual; to treat the Icelandic women as they would like their own wives or sisters to be treated; to guard against boredom; to continually learn new routines, jobs and skills; to keep all military information secret; to learn Icelandic and to teach English; and to never, ever scavenge: 'it is most unpopular with foreigners.'[47] Evidently, a positive image was sought.

There are two reasons the Icelanders did not experience deterioration in their quality of life. Firstly, minimal force was utilised against them. This policy, introduced by Colonel

[42] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 98.

[43] *Ibid*.

[44] The National Archives, WO 176/287, 'Ten Commandments for British Troops in Iceland', 16 May 1940.

[45] *Ibid*.

[46] *Ibid*.

[47] *Ibid*.

Robert Sturges on 10 May 1940, originally stipulated that 2nd Royal Marine Battalion could commence firing only once a set number of casualties had been sustained, the number of which is not disclosed.[48] Even then, returning fire was permitted only if further loss of life looked likely.[49] This considerable act of restraint demonstrated that the British did not want to impose their will on the Icelanders through force. Later, when *Alabaster* arrived, Brigadier George Lammie, followed by his successor Major General Harry Curtis, implemented a variant: 'Force should not be employed unless absolutely necessary'.[50] Expanding on this point further, Donald F. Bittner writes: 'Saboteurs were to be arrested, not shot; sabotage incidents were to be reported to headquarters; Icelanders assaulting or insulting the troops would be taken into custody and turned over to the military police.'[51] Whilst abuse against military personnel of any nationality by Icelanders remained rare, there are documented incidents of certain individuals, typically youths, who were observed deliberately quarrelling with sentries, spitting at them and/or presenting them with Nazi salutes.[52] Angus Macnaghten, during his memoir *Vigil in Iceland: A Fragment of Autobiography, 1940-1942*, recounts a rather humorous 'little ditty'[53] that, he claims, all British soldiers would become accustomed to:

'It's a hap, hap, happy day,
When the British go away,
And the Germans come

[48] The Royal Marines Museum Archive, ARCH 7/19/18, War Diary memo, 9 May 1940.

[49] *Ibid*.

[50] The National Archives, WO 176/287, 'Confidential Memorandum No. 1', 9 July 1940.

[51] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 94.

[52] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, Howard-Smith to Halifax, 27 June 1940, p. 1 and Bittner, The Lion and the White Falcon, p. 95.

[53] A. Macnaghten, *Vigil in Iceland: A Fragment of Autobiography, 1940-1942* (Slough: Chas Luff, 1977), p. 19.

With their boom, boom, boom,

It's a hap, hap, happy day.'[54]

Typically, British soldiers took such taunts in their stride: 'Don't be so ruddy daft',[55] would be a common response. To say, however, that Icelanders were completely guaranteed against excessive force, particularly after an altercation, would be incorrect. The Canadian contingent in Iceland, also commanded by Major General Curtis, had a tendency to appear not dissimilar from their British partners except in two key ways, accent and temperament (see figure fourteen).[56] When these troops were abused or taunted, the naive perpetrators, instead of receiving a relatively good humoured response, would be met with swift and strong reprisals – a fist full of knuckles or even a dip in the harbour.[57] Canadian soldiers, it would seem, did not take personal insults easily, even when ordered to show restraint by their General Officer Commanding.[58]

Secondly, minimal violence was inflicted against the Icelanders. Whilst accidents happened, with some civilians becoming victims of these, injuries inflicted through unprovoked aggression or vastly disproportionate reprisals were rare and swiftly dealt with.[59] One notable case was when a British soldier, on 31 May 1940, 'misconducted himself with a child';[60] the perpetrator was court-martialled and found to be mentally unstable.[61] Another

[54] A. Macnaghten, *Vigil in Iceland*, p. 19.

[55] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 95, cited from one of five unpublished transactions that have been referenced within the sixteenth endnote of Chapter Four.

[56] The National Archives, WO 106/3043, 'Instructions to Major General Curtis, Officer Commanding Troops, Iceland', p. 2 and Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 95.

[57] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 95.

[58] The National Archives, WO 176/287, 'Confidential Memorandum No. 1', 9 July 1940.

[59] *Ibid*., 'Alabaster Force Intelligence Summery No. 18', 2 September 1940, p. 3.

[60] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, Jónsson to Unwin, 20 August 1940, p. 4.

notable case was when a British merchant seaman, on the late evening/early morning of 1-2 December 1941, 'stabbed two people';[62] the perpetrator was tried in an Icelandic court.[63]

Thus far, it would appear as if the British occupation of Iceland, following consolidation and reinforcement, did little, if anything, to damage Icelandic freedoms. Unfortunately, this perception shall now be broken.

When Howard-Smith first visited the Icelandic government on 10 May 1940, besides promising that Britain would support Iceland's economy, he also promised that Britain would not interfere with Iceland's domestic affairs.[64] This had been a sincere undertaking; the British authorities in Iceland did not want to be perceived as possessing totalitarian attributes. Such a promise, however, proved impossible to keep when security was considered at risk through occurrences directly or indirectly related with Icelandic domestic affairs. Indeed, 'the British saw that the reality of the military situation',[65] writes Bittner, 'dictated a more activist policy.'[66] Unsurprisingly, this realisation was very embarrassing for Howard-Smith. Therefore, in a bid to retain some credibility, he took the following stance:

> I told M. Stefan Joh. Stefansson that it remained true now as it was on May 10 that we had no intention of interfering with the civil liberties of Iceland; but he must realise

---

[61] The National Archives, WO 176/287, War Diary entry, 31 May 1940 and Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 96.

[62] The National Archives, WO 176/289, 'Iceland (C) Force Intelligence Summary No. 85', 7 December 1941, p. 3.

[63] *Ibid*.

[64] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, Howard-Smith to Halifax, 29 May 1940, p. 3.

[65] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 99

[66] *Ibid*.

> that it was the duty of the General Officer Commanding to take such steps as he thought necessary for the safety of the country and his own men.[67]

It is indeed fortunate that Howard-Smith could call on his firsthand experience as Minister to Denmark, particularly regarding the German threat, to provide substance for such arguments.

Of all the rare infringements on Icelandic liberty, the vast majority were clearly necessary and thus encountered little protest.[68] If an objection arose, a compromise would be obtained wherever possible.[69] There remained, however, one infringement that aroused extreme opposition, and justifiably so. This was the internment of troublesome Icelanders, people found guilty or who were suspected of, writes Bittner, 'security violations or actions considered detrimental to the war effort.'[70] It was not necessarily the act of interning these people that was so widely detested; it was more the location and result of their internment.[71] *Alabaster* did not possess sufficient detention facilities in Iceland with which to hold any serious trouble makers.[72] As a result, such people were shipped over to Britain, a location that was dangerous to get to, dangerous to be in and ultimately, not their own country.[73] Only four occurrences of deportations took place, resulting in sixteen deported Icelanders in total. During September 1940, two young Icelanders were deported after they had been caught in possession of wireless transmitters, the use of which was prohibited for civilians whilst

[67] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, Howard-Smith to Halifax, 16 July 1940, p. 2.

[68] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 100.

[69] *Ibid*.

[70] *Ibid*., pp. 100-101.

[71] *Ibid*., p. 101.

[72] *Ibid*.

[73] *Ibid*.

British forces remained in occupation.[74] Next, during April 1941, four fishermen were deported after they had been caught corresponding with Germans.[75] Also during this month, the three editors of *Þjóðviljinn* (hereafter anglicised as *Thjodviljinn*), a local communist newspaper, were deported.[76] They had been sanctioning sustained written attacks on *Alabaster* that ranged variably from accusing each soldier of possessing venereal diseases, accusing the British military authorities of withholding pay owed to Icelandic labourers, and calling for strikes at the various military works, notably the aerodrome.[77] Finally, during June 1941, seven inhabitants of the northwest peninsular were deported after they had been caught assisting a German sailor to evade capture for over twelve months.[78] Whilst the second and fourth rounds of deportations produced little or no reaction – these internees were considered by most to have been very foolish and deserving of punishment – and whilst the first round of deportations produced vigorous but equally weighted opinions, the third round of deportations produced a major crisis in Anglo-Icelandic relations.[79]

Thjodviljinn had been a source of great irritation to the British authorities in Iceland. Its pages attacked 2nd Royal Marine Battalion and *Alabaster* mercilessly, spreading unfounded lies and generally causing a nuisance.[80] Thought to have been financed by Moscow, *Thjodviljinn* targeted anyone and everyone, including the Althing.[81] This latter point is rather curious as one of its three editors, Einar Olgeirsson, was also an Icelandic

[74] The National Archives, WO 176/287, 'Alabaster Force Intelligence Summery No. 15', 2 September 1940.

[75] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 101.

[76] The National Archives, FO 371/32767, 'Annual Report on Iceland for the Year 1941', 16 March 1942, p. 8.

[77] The National Archives, FO 371/24779, 'Translation from Þjóðviljinn', 17 September 1940, p. 2; 'Summary of an Article which Appeared in "Þjóðviljinn" of the 5 September 1940'; The National Archives, WO 106/3035, Curtis to anonymous, 28 April 1941.

[78] The National Archives, WO 176/288, 'Iceland Force Intelligence Summery No. 60', 13 June 1941.

[79] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, pp. 101-103.

[80] The National Archives, WO 106/3035, Curtis to anonymous, 28 April 1941.

[81] The National Archives, WO 106/3042, Davis to Conyers-Baker, 5 March 1941, p. 2.

MP.[82] *Thjodviljinn* had poor circulation – approximately 1500 per year.[83] As a result, the British authorities tolerated it; after all, censorship of Iceland's press was not a label they wanted bestowed on their actions.[84] Unfortunately, such tolerance did not last for long, and following one particularly serious incident, both Major General Curtis and Howard-Smith agreed that action would be needed to silence *Thjodviljinn's* lies.[85]

On 5 January 1941, two Icelanders were caught distributing leaflets amongst British troops.[86] These leaflets contained information about a planned work strike that was occurring throughout Reykjavík and the surrounding area.[87] In addition, they called for an outright insurrection should any military personnel receive orders to intervene:

> SOLDIERS! Three of Iceland's leading Trade-Unions are now on strike. […] In the docks, the factories, and the British camps, our strike is 100%. […] We ask that the standard working day in Iceland be reduced from ten to nine hours, […]. We ask that wages be fixed strictly according to prices, […]. Already there are signs that you will be used to break the strike. […] A man who takes over the job of a fellow-worker on strike is one of the most contemptible human beings. He is a scab, a Blackleg. Many of you are Trade-Unionists. You are from the land, which is the home of Trade-Unionism. Surely you will not Blackleg on your fellow Trade-Unionists in Iceland. […] Soldiers, if you stand firm our victory is certain, and you will win the friendship and gratitude of our people. Speak bravely to your officers. Speak bravely in the face

[82] The National Archives, FO 371/32767, 'Annual Report on Iceland for the Year 1941', 16 March 1942, p. 8.

[83] The National Archives, WO 106/3042, Davis to Conyers-Baker, 5 March 1941, p. 2.

[84] The National Archives, WO 106/3035, Curtis to anonymous, 28 April 1941.

[85] *Ibid*.

[86] The National Archives, FO 371/32767, 'Annual Report on Iceland for the Year 1941', 16 March 1942, p. 8.

[87] The National Archives, FO 371/29297, 'Information about the Strike', pp. 1-2.

of Ólafur Thors and his money-grabbing friends: 'WE ARE SOLDIERS, NOT STRIKE-BREAKERS'.[88]

Obviously, this incident became very serious; Major General Curtis could not afford for his troops to cultivate an air of disobedience. After rapid but extensive enquiries, eight men were arrested, charged with offences against British forces, and tried within an Icelandic court.[89] The composer and translator of the leaflets received an eighteen month prison sentence whilst the two distributors received a four month prison sentence.[90] In addition, much to Major General Curtis' relief, two editors of *Thjodviljinn*, one being Olgeirsson, received a three month prison sentence.[91] It transpired that the whole incident had been concocted and fuelled by this newspaper.[92]

Under normal circumstances, Olgeirsson's conviction should have put an end to *Thjodviljinn*, or at least restrained it. The MP, however, had parliamentary immunity, a legal shield that postponed his sentence until the adjournment of the Althing.[93] Consequently, Olgeirsson was free to continue his malicious attacks. Major General Curtis now found himself in a very difficult situation. He could no longer claim that the Icelandic constitution had failed to deliver justice, but a legitimate technicality had delayed justice from being fulfilled. Ultimately, it seemed as if Major General Curtis could not silence *Thjodviljinn* without causing a significant political upheaval – something that had to be avoided. His

[88] The National Archives, FO 371/29297, 'Information about the Strike', pp. 1-2.

[89] The National Archives, FO 371/32767, 'Annual Report on Iceland for the Year 1941', 16 March 1942, p. 8.

[90] *Ibid*.

[91] *Ibid*.

[92] *Ibid*.

[93] *Ibid*.

hands were effectively tied. Three months later, however, an untenable situation developed, one that necessitated *Thjodviljinn's* immediate closure, regardless of outcome.

On 7 April 1941, *Thjodviljinn* published a grossly malicious article that presented nothing but falsehoods regarding the working conditions of the Icelandic labourers at the yet unfinished airfield near Reykjavík.[94] Indeed, it portrayed dreadful scenarios – disease, undernourishment and bondage – that were far from accurate.[95] The article concluded by calling for another strike, this time at the airfield itself.[96] These comments would prove to be *Thjodviljinn's* undoing. Major General Curtis desperately needed that airfield completed; increased airborne surveillance of Iceland and the surrounding waters was dependent on it.[97] Therefore, he instructed Howard-Smith to communicate with London, seeking advice.[98] The response they received was swift and clear: suppress *Thjodviljinn*, deport its editors.[99] Consequently, on 28 April 1941, these instructions were carried out.[100]

There remain questions over whether suppression of *Thjodviljinn* would have been enough to silence its vocal and malicious sentiments. Major General Curtis, Howard-Smith and their superiors in London believed not.[101] Indeed, if Olgeirsson's conviction did little to change *Thjodviljinn's* conduct, who is to say that an outright ban would have made any difference? After all, a replacement newspaper, similar in ideology, was not beyond the

[94] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 105.

[95] *Ibid*.

[96] The National Archives, WO 106/3035, Curtis to anonymous, 28 April 1941.

[97] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 105.

[98] *Ibid*.

[99] *Ibid*.

[100] The National Archives, WO 106/3035, Curtis to anonymous, 28 April 1941.

[101] *Ibid*.

realms of possibility: 'Editorial staff has brains and ability and should not be left longer at large.'[102] Therefore, although extremely unpopular, deportation appeared necessary.

Regardless whether this act of censorship and these deportations were justified, it cannot be avoided that such decisions, albeit in the name of security, flagrantly breached freedom of expression, freedom of the press and the Icelandic constitution – everything Howard-Smith had promised would not happen. Six days later, the Althing protested strongly, along with other Icelandic newspapers, about the deportations.[103] Although the other MPs of the Althing disliked Olgeirsson and his newspaper, the fact that both had been removed by an alien occupying force completely undermined the Icelandic Government's legitimate authority over local affairs.[104] Indeed, the Althing stated that, due to its meagre circulation, *Thjodviljinn* was harmless.[105] *Vísir*, newspaper of the Independence Party, summed up the general situation as perceived by most islanders: unimpaired liberty in Iceland no longer existed.[106]

Another area where Britain impeded Icelandic freedoms was when it unofficially persuaded this small nation not to break the terms of the 1918 Dano-Icelandic Act of Union and prematurely declare itself a republic. During October 1940, after British forces had established themselves within Iceland, prominent members of the Althing began questioning whether they could initiate the public wish for a complete and irreversible separation from Denmark.[107] Jonas Jonsson, chairman of the Socialist Unity Party, asked Howard-Smith to

[102] The National Archives, WO 106/3035, Curtis to anonymous, 28 April 1941.

[103] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 106.

[104] The National Archives, FO 371/32767, 'Annual Report on Iceland for the Year 1941', 16 March 1942, p. 8.

[105] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 106.

[106] *Ibid.*

[107] S. B. J. Hardarson, 'The "Republic of Iceland" 1940-1944: Anglo-American Attitudes and Influences', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 9 (1974), p. 35.

clarify London's opinion on this matter.[108] At first, Howard-Smith responded positively, he believed the British Government had no opinion on the matter.[109] Such a belief, however, was far from correct.

During January 1941, Howard-Smith took leave and returned to Britain.[110] Whilst there, he was instructed by his superiors to unofficially do everything in his power to prevent separation of Iceland from Denmark.[111] It was believed that if Iceland became a republic, it could produce serious political consequences for Britain, its image and political standing within Europe.[112] Britain was not a party to the 1918 Dano-Icelandic Act of Union, and had promised not to interfere with Icelandic affaires.[113] Consequently, it feared being perceived in Denmark and elsewhere as having facilitated this separation.[114] Howard-Smith did as instructed and unofficially, during informal conversations, promoted the upholding of the 1918 Dano-Icelandic Act of Union.[115] A good example of this can be found on 10 February 1941, where Howard-Smith, controversially, likened an early separation to behaviour conducted by Germany's fascist regime:

> Indeed, it might be said that the action of Iceland in abrogating the [1918 Dano-Icelandic] Act of Union would in essence be no different from the action of Germany in tearing up, in April 1940, the nonaggression treaty which she had concluded with

[108] Hardarson, 'The "Republic of Iceland" 1940-1944', *Journal of Contemporary History*, p. 35.

[109] *Ibid.*

[110] *Ibid*., p. 36.

[111] *Ibid.*

[112] *Ibid*.

[113] *Ibid*.

[114] *Ibid.*

[115] *Ibid*., p. 37

> Denmark […] [during] May 1939; tearing it up because it did not suit her political convenience at that moment, the ordinary technique of the totalitarian state.[116]

What is so striking about this whole affair is Iceland's apparent wish for Britain's approval to sever connections with Denmark, an approval Britain did not want to grant. On 10 February 1941, the Icelandic Prime Minister, Hermann Jónasson, gave Howard-Smith a dominant reason why he believed the Union could be severed; Denmark was no longer a free nation in charge of its own destiny.[117] In addition, senior Icelandic law scholars legitimised such a decision; Denmark could not fulfil its obligations laid down in the original contract.[118] These were persuasive arguments, so Howard-Smith sought advice on how to respond.[119] He was instructed to maintain the following line: Britain would regard the separation as a matter for Iceland and Denmark to deal with, but if consulted, it would promote adherence to the Act.[120]

It would appear that Howard-Smith was successful in his task of unofficially persuading members of the Althing to drop their idea of premature severance. In an article for *Tíminn*, Hermann Jónasson, the Icelandic Prime Minister, stressed that Britain would consider any ending of the 1918 Dano-Icelandic Act of Union as an attack on the principals the Allies were fighting for.[121] These views were quietly understood amongst most members of the Icelandic government, but not all. Jonsson, chairman of the Progressive Party, for

[116] The National Archives, FO 371/29311, Howard-Smith to Eden, 10 February 1940.

[117] Hardarson, 'The "Republic of Iceland" 1940-1944', *Journal of Contemporary History*, p. 37.

[118] *Ibid*., p. 38.

[119] *Ibid*.

[120] *Ibid*.

[121] *Ibid*., p. 39.

example, published in a newspaper that Britain would support separation.[122] To counter this, Jónasson, the Icelandic Prime Minister, published the official British line.[123] This situation – the fact that the Icelandic Prime Minister had started relying on British policy to keep his position of power credible – demonstrates how influential, albeit unofficially, Britain had become. In the end, a decision regarding the declaration of a complete and irreversible republic was dropped towards the latter half of 1941 and would not surface again in any meaningful debate until after the British occupation of Iceland had concluded.[124] It would appear that British reservations to the separation were stimulated by Whitehall's concern for its nation's image. Fundamentally, the British invasion and occupation of Iceland was illegal, albeit for righteous intentions. This deed did not need highlighting with further acts of illegality.

Thus far, Chapter Two of this dissertation has addressed whether, throughout 20 May 1940-22 April 1942, the British occupation preserved Icelandic freedoms. It has not addressed whether the British occupation secured Allied interests in Northern Europe, something that shall now be discussed.

Following the fall of France, retention of Iceland as a base for British forces meant that access to and from the North Atlantic still remained practicable.[125] This was very important; it meant that the Allies could provide a relatively secure passage for their merchant ships when approaching or leaving Britain.[126] Indeed, scholars believe that, had

[122] Hardarson, 'The "Republic of Iceland" 1940-1944', *Journal of Contemporary History*, p. 39.

[123] *Ibid*., p. 40.

[124] *Ibid*., p. 45.

[125] Bittner, 'A Final Appraisal of the British Occupation of Iceland', *The RUSI Journal*, p. 47

[126] *Ibid*.

Germany invaded, complete closure of the northern approach would have been total, just like the southern approach.[127]

By the end of 1941, following completion of the military bases in Iceland, a remarkable shift in local dominance took place, the Allies gained almost complete and uncompromising control of the sea surrounding Iceland.[128] Such a scenario had not always been the case. During September 1940, 267,618 tons of shipping had been destroyed by enemy U-boats, whilst a further 53,283 tons had been destroyed by enemy aircraft, all on the northern approach.[129] In total, 1940 saw 1,805,495 tons of shipping destroyed whilst January-June 1941 saw 1,800,190 tons of shipping destroyed.[130] All this, however, would change. On 28 May 1941, Reykjavik airfield opened and accepted its first aircraft.[131] From then on, increased air cover was practicable over the North Atlantic. Indeed, so successful was it that between c. 8 July-19 August 1941, not one ship had been lost to enemy action – a tremendous achievement (see figure fifteen).[132] This air cover, along with the newly opened naval base at Hvalfjörður – a facility that offered services for convoy escort and merchant ships – meant, finally, Britain's significant lifeline for much needed food and war resources received near complete coverage across the North Atlantic (see figure sixteen).[133] What had originally been a desperate enterprise to deny a piece of land from Germany had turned into an enterprise to conduct crucial services in aid of the Allies' war effort. This achievement had resulted from, firstly, maintaining a continually open doorway for merchant ships in and

[127] Bittner, 'A Final Appraisal of the British Occupation of Iceland', *The RUSI Journal*, p. 47

[128] The National Archives, WO 106/3040, Primrose to Curtis, 19 August 1940.

[129] S. W. Roskill, *The War at Sea, 1939-1945*: The Defensive* (London: HMSO, 1976), p. 350.

[130] *Ibid*., pp. 617-618.

[131] The National Archives, WO 106/3035, Curtis to anonymous, 28 May 1941.

[132] The National Archives, WO 106/3040, Primrose to Curtis, 19 August 1940.

[133] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 65.

out of Britain; secondly, providing a base for aircraft and naval ships to escort merchant ships to and from North America; thirdly, providing a stop-off-point for aircraft on the long journey to and from Britain and the North America; and fourthly, providing a staging post for merchant ships from Britain and North America before they commenced the incredibly dangerous journey north-east towards Russia – who was also under attack by Germany.[134] 'London's sudden, essentially unprepared and unplanned decision to send forces there',[135] writes Bittner, 'was rewarded in ways unforeseen in the spring of 1940.'[136]

The third and final way the occupation of Iceland secured Allied interests in Northern Europe was by providing an excellent training ground in which to prepare Allied troops for combat (see figure seventeen). The island, at times, had a harsh and forbidding environment; training within tough conditions would produce soldiers capable of defeating battle hardened Axis forces.[137] Equally important, this training also taught British soldiers how to survive on Iceland.[138] Throughout 10 May 1940-22 April 1942, only 128 soldiers perished on Iceland.[139] Whilst these deaths resulted from a number of reasons, enemy action being one of them, most were due to environmental factors such as weather and terrain with accompanying disorientation and/or human error.[140] The losses would undoubtedly have been greater had training not been undertaken to overcome the island conditions.

When considering the above essential points, whereas the first nineteen days of the British occupation of Iceland – covered within Chapter One of this dissertation – failed

[134] Bittner, 'A Final Appraisal of the British Occupation of Iceland', *The RUSI Journal*, p. 47 and Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 4.

[135] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 85.

[136] *Ibid.*

[137] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

[138] *Ibid.*

[139] *Ibid.*

[140] *Ibid.*

entirely to preserve Icelandic freedoms and secure Allied interests in Northern Europe, the period following, 20 May 1940-22 April 1942, counters this perception. Iceland's economy was secured. This outcome was achieved, firstly, through Britain guaranteeing all Iceland's exports, and secondly, through eradication of unemployment resulting from demands for labour on critical construction projects. In addition, Iceland received further material benefits through goodwill gestures. Granted, there were occasions, throughout 20 May 1940-22 April 1942, where Britain's actions hampered Icelandic freedoms – for example, the deportation of sixteen Icelanders and the forced closure of an Icelandic newspaper – but these were justified and reduced in significance due to the financial and social profit and long term security obtained. Allied interests, by contrast, had only positive long-term outcomes. Firstly, the occupation ensured that an enemy blockade of Britain's one and only access point to and from the North Atlantic was precluded, and secondly, the occupation allowed for construction of facilities, such as air and naval bases, that would be immeasurably beneficial to Britain's North Atlantic supply line. Finally, Iceland provided an excellent training ground where *Alabaster's* soldiers could hone their fighting skills in preparation for the day when they would face Adolf Hitler's elite forces throughout mainland Europe.

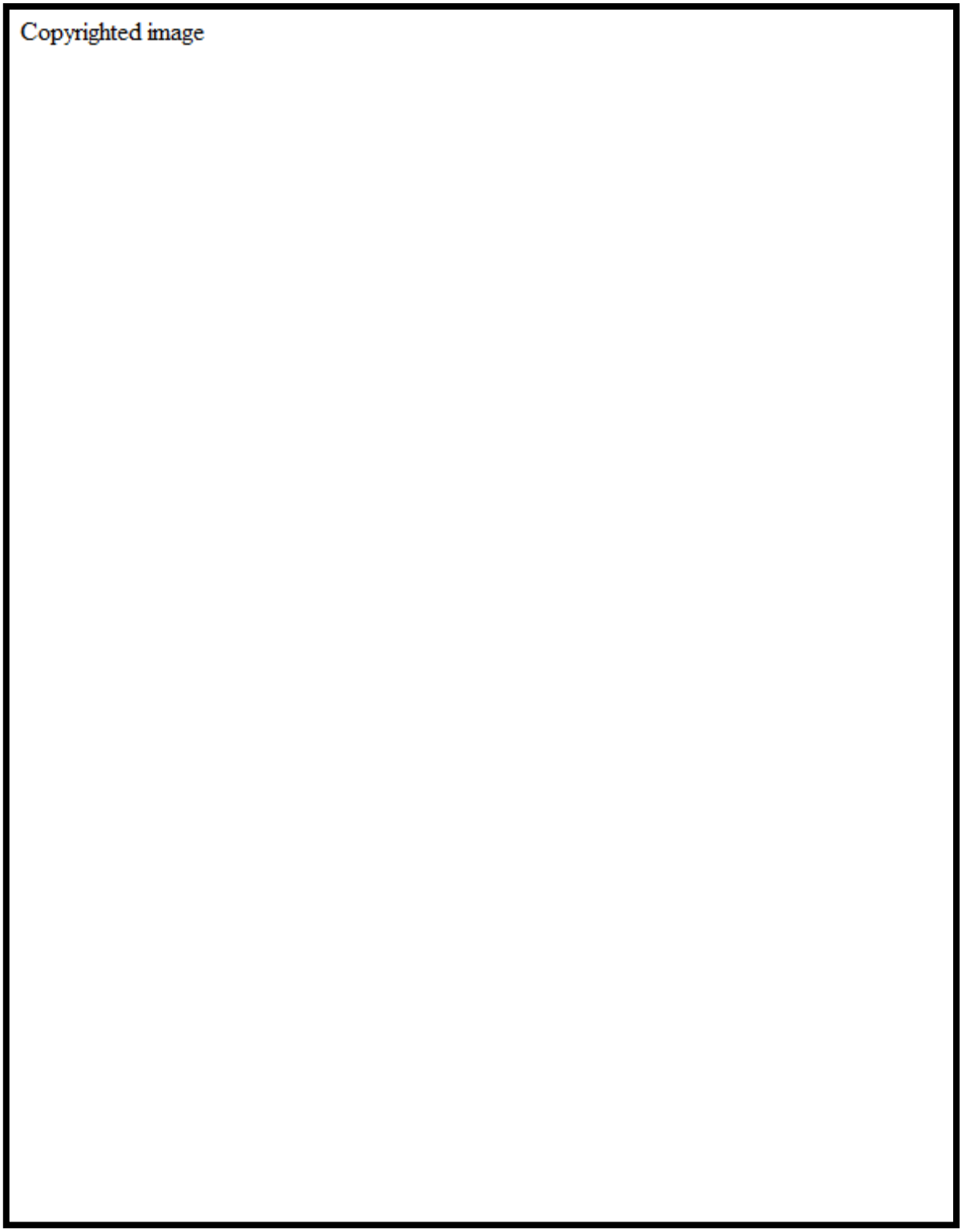

Figure Thirteen[141] – Civilian Labourers in Iceland.

[141] Þ. Whitehead, *Ísland í hers höndum* (Reykjavík: Vaka-Helgafell, 2002), p. 75.

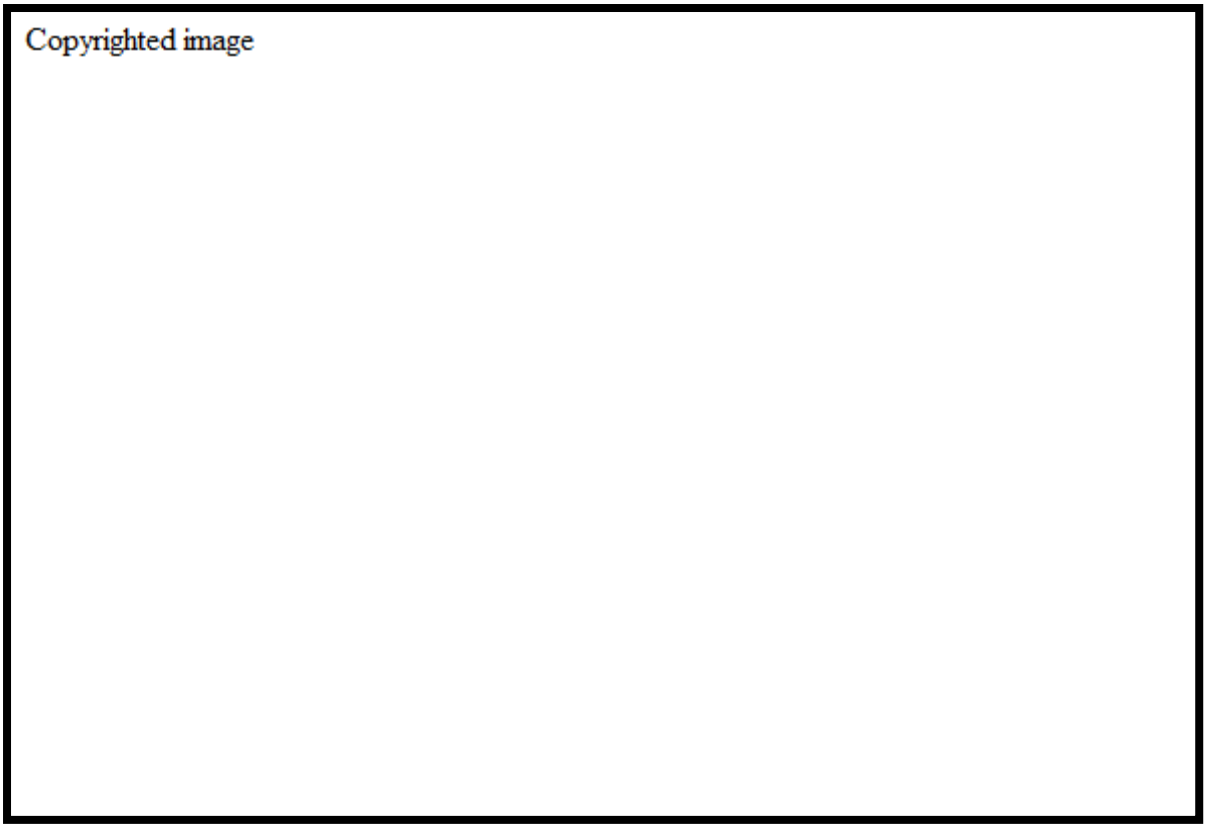

Figure Fourteen[142] – Canadian Soldiers in Iceland.

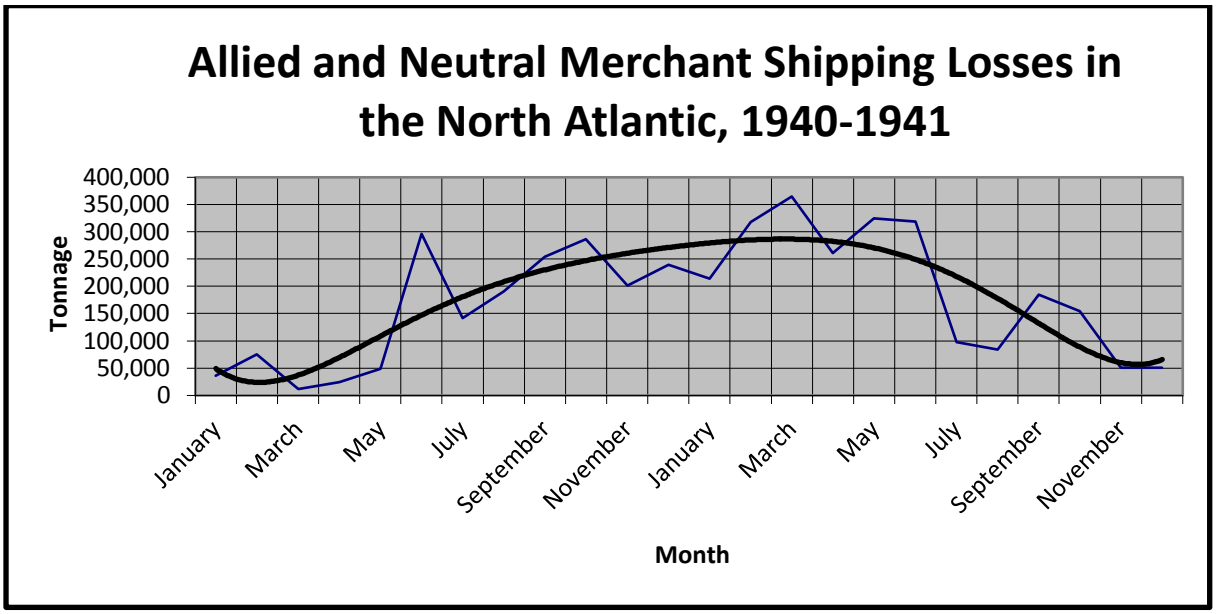

Figure Fifteen[143]

[142] Roberts, 'They Never Had Seen a Soldier', *The Saturday Earning Post*, p. 20.

[143] P. W. Deans, 2012

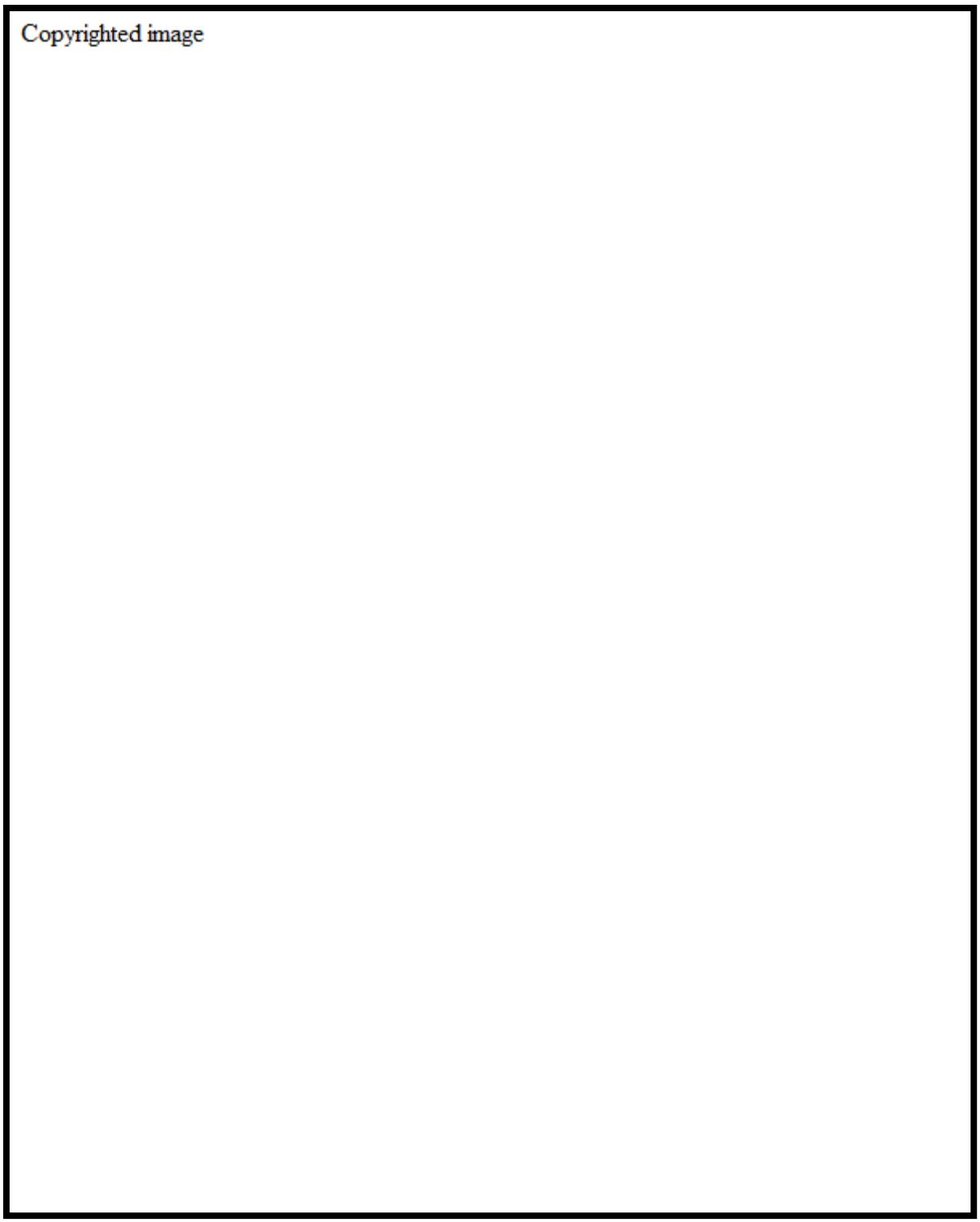

Figure Sixteen[144]

[144] Roskill, *The War at Sea*, between pp. 456-457.

Figure Seventeen[145] – Ski Troops on Exercise in Iceland.

[145] J. Miller, *The North Atlantic Front: Orkney, Shetland, Faroe, and Iceland at War* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2003), p. 115.

Conclusion

The British invasion and occupation of Iceland is one of the most under researched and unknown events from the Second World War. A general survey on proceedings throughout 1939-1945 will, typically, omit any detail greater than date and reason for occurrence. *Second World War* by Martin Gilbert and *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* by Gerhard L. Weinberg both exemplify this point.[1] Furthermore, its limited historiography, as has already been detailed, offers little meaningful analysis. Consequently, so that greater understanding could be attained regarding outcome, this dissertation, entitled 'The Uninvited Guests: Britain's Military Forces in Iceland, 1940-1942', has attempted to answer one specific but pertinent question: to what extent did the British invasion and subsequent occupation of Iceland preserve Icelandic freedoms and secure Allied interests in Northern Europe?

This dissertation covers two periods throughout 10 May 1940-22 April 1942, firstly, 10-19 May 1940; and secondly, 20 May 1940-22 April 1942. The former covers the invasion and first nineteen days of occupation, the period in which Iceland's defence was in the hands of the 2nd Royal Marine Battalion (hereafter 2RM), whilst the latter covers the remaining 703 days, the period in which the defence of Iceland was left predominantly in the hands of 147th Infantry Brigade (hereafter *Alabaster*). On 10 May 1940, 815 Marines from 2nd Royal Marine Battalion landed in Iceland and established control of Reykjavík. They successfully achieved their objectives: firstly, to capture all strategic locations; secondly, to capture all enemy aliens and sympathisers; thirdly, to

[1] M. Gilbert, *Second World War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), pp. 63, 190, 208, 239, 314 and 325 and G. L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 121, 243 and 306.

make all defensive arrangements possible; fourthly, to obtain co-operation of the local law enforcement agency; and fifthly, to conduct friendly relations with the Icelandic government. It would certainly appear as if Operation *Fork* had been a triumph. The dissertation, however, showed otherwise: firstly, little time had been set aside with which to plan everything; secondly, nobody within 2nd Royal Marine Battalion or the accompanying intelligence detachment could speak either German or Icelandic; thirdly, only three maps – one drawn from memory – had been gathered; and fourthly, despite leaving unchecked stores at Greenock, stores that might have been invaluable, the force was late sailing. The dissertation subsequently questioned how the Admiralty could have let such chaos occur, particularly with reference to the lack of maps. The conclusion was because of there being very little time from the decision to invade Iceland to the commencement of the operation. The dissertation then moved on to analyse the composition of 2nd Royal Marine Battalion and found it to be substandard. Little training, particularly with weapons handling, had been undertaken – fifty soldiers had never fired their weapons – whilst none of the weapons issued, including the heavy support weapons, were in an operational state of readiness. The dissertation argued that 2nd Royal Marine Battalion was in no state to fight. The dissertation, having kept its findings on *Fork* and 2RM in mind, then moved on to analyse the composition of the predicted opponents that 2RM were expecting to face during and soon after *Fork*. There was found to be a stark contrast, not so much with the first wave of expected opponents – the Icelandic police and local German residents/shipwrecked sailors, who still could have put up some notable resistance – but the second, the land forces of the Wermacht. The Wermacht would have been efficient, expertly trained and well equipped. As the concluding words

of Chapter One's analysis states, the predicted German army was everything 2RM was not – the German army would have all but obliterated this small band of British defenders. Ultimately, Chapter One shows that the British invasion and first nineteen days of the occupation did little to preserve Icelandic freedoms or secure Allied interests in Northern Europe – it took Iceland's right to remain conflict free and, due to the quality of *Fork* and 2RM, offered the Allies little security from enemy activity in that region.

On 20 May 1940, a force codenamed *Alabaster*, comprising troops from the British Army and subsequently from the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, assumed control of Iceland's defence. The dissertation found that this force was initially as equally unprepared to defend Iceland. Not for long, however, for within six weeks, the minimal security requirements of the island had been assured. Whereas Chapter One focused its analysis predominantly on the British military, Chapter Two focused its analysis predominantly on the occupation's significant effect on Iceland's way of life. The dissertation first studied the effects that the occupation had on all Icelandic exports and found that Britain agreed to take on all of the trade that Iceland would have lost with Britain's enemies, if not more. This the dissertation found to be important, not just for Iceland, who needed the trade, but also for Britain, who needed the food that Iceland exported. The dissertation then proceeded to study the effects the occupation had on the Island's mass unemployment and found that within a very short time, there ceased to be unemployment – with obvious benefits to the island population. Other obvious benefits, the dissertation discovered, were derived from the British military's need to pay for services to help it conduct the occupation, and the British military's various good-will gestures, designed to show that it cared. At this point it seemed as if no element of the

occupation, following *Alabaster's* reinforcement, produced a detrimental effect upon Iceland. The dissertation, however, soon discovered that such elements did exist. Whilst officially, Britain made sincere promises not to interfere with local Icelandic affairs, the dissertation discovered this was an unrealistic promise. A number of examples were found where Icelandic national security was compromised through the actions of naive, stupid or malicious Icelanders. The results of these actions were the forced deportation to Britain of the perpetrators, the most controversial being deportation of editors and the forced closure of a newspaper Although the publication was unpopular on the island, this action to close was more so as many felt it was a disproportionate and unnecessary cap on the freedom of speech. The dissertation also found the British diplomatic authorities meddled in local affairs by influencing the delay in the Althing's attempt to promote independence. The influence was so great that the Icelandic Prime Minister relied on confidential British policy to support his position in office as he tried to promote a delay in gaining independence. The Prime Minister needed to make public Britain's standing on the subject to persuade other members of the Althing that it was in their country's interest to delay. The dissertation finally analysed the effect the occupation had on Allied security in Northern Europe. It found, following the reinforcement of *Alabaster*, security had taken a complete u-turn from providing no security to significant security. The dissertation found that not only did the occupation ensure entry and exit routes to the North Atlantic remained open and free from the threat of closure, it also allowed for enhanced Allied protection for the convoys of supplies travelling to and from North America. Finally, the dissertation determined that Iceland proved to be a diverse and superb training ground for British troops to develop their battle skills on uncomfortable

and hostile terrain. Ultimately, Chapter Two showed that the British occupation of Iceland following 20 May 1940 greatly preserved Icelandic freedoms and secured Allied interests in Northern Europe. Iceland developed economically and socially whilst Allied convoys received enhanced protection thus ensuring many lives were saved.

In conclusion, this dissertation has demonstrated that the British occupation of Iceland was an overall success. It assisted long term with Iceland's economic and social development whilst assisting the Allies with winning the war. Granted, militarily the first nineteen days were an absolute disaster. The military put Iceland at risk for no perceivable gain. Following an unfavourable start however, with the greater investment in resources, the military corrected its deficiencies and created an environment in which mutual benefits could flourish.

The British occupation concluded on 22 April 1942 when American forces assumed complete responsibility for Iceland's defence.[2] This did not mean the British withdrew completely, the Royal Air force, for example, maintained a presence on the island until 1947.[3] The Army, along with its commanding officer, Major General Curtis, slowly returned to Britain on and following 22 April 1942.[4] The occupation had not been easy; problems were encountered but successfully overcome. Anglo-Icelandic relations had both high and low points but concluded strong, secure and above all, on good terms:

[2] The National Archives, FO 371/32749, Howard-Smith to Eden, 21 April 1942, p. 1 and The National Archives, WO 176/290, anonymous to all British soldiers in Iceland, 22 April 1942.

[3] D. F. Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon: Britain an Iceland in the World War II Era* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1983), p. 144.

[4] *Ibid*.

'It was a particularly unique example in history',[5] summarised Árni Jónsson, a member of the Althing throughout 1940-1942 and a member of Reykjavík City Council throughout 1942-1945, 'of an occupying Army which was better liked on the day of its departure than on the day of its arrival.'[6] On 19 April 1942, Major General Curtis attended luncheon with Major General Charles Bonesteel, the day before this senior American commander assumed control of all Allied forces on Iceland.[7] At this gathering, Major General Bonesteel, under orders from the President of America, decorated Major General Curtis with the Distinguished Service Medal – for two years he had managed the situation in Iceland and earned the respect of his troops.[8] That night, Major General Curtis wrote a letter to Howard-Smith, thanking him for all his assistance throughout the past two years.[9]

Howard-Smith is, arguably, one of Britain's unsung heroes, an unsung hero from an unsung success story of British foreign and military policy. He should be credited, along with the average British soldier, for facilitating much of what was good about Anglo-Icelandic relations throughout 1940-1942. To senior Icelanders and Britons alike, Howard-Smith – through his advice, patience, understanding and empathy – became a friend, a confidant, a go-between; a receptacle for criticism when Anglo-Icelandic relations were troubled; and someone who could interpret opposing political standpoints. He was a consummate diplomat and a tactful intermediary. It is very sad that Howard-

[5] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 160, cited from *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 5th series, vol. 398, col. 889.

[6] *Ibid*.

[7] The National Archives, FO 371/32749, Howard-Smith to Eden, 21 April 1942, p. 1.

[8] *Ibid*.

[9] *Ibid*., Curtis to Howard-Smith, 20 April, 1942.

Smith would fail to see peace in Europe; he died in Iceland on 23 July 1942.[10] During his funeral, Icelanders lined the cortège's path whilst Icelandic politicians followed on foot.[11] This outpouring of emotion, this public and official demonstration of mourning, is 'mute evidence',[12] writes Bittner, that British policy on this small island in the North Atlantic had been, ultimately, a success story.

[10] The National Archives, FO 371/36784, 'Annual Report on Iceland for the Year 1942', 19 January 1943, p. 1.

[11] *Ibid*.

[12] Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon*, p. 114.

Appendix

The following text has been transcribed from a War Office document. See bibliography under WO 176/287 for access details. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation appear as original.

-- start --

TEN COMMANDMENTS

for British Troops in Iceland.

1. Don't forget that this is the first time that British troops have landed in Iceland: we represent the British Empire and it is by our behaviour, discipline, and bearing that the British will be judged.

2. Don't forget that the farm or house where you may be billeted temporarily is the Icelanders home, and treat it as you would like to have your own home treated if the positions were reversed.

3. Do not judge the inhabitants too hastily, remember that our ways may be as strange to them as theirs are to us. Remember that we are in the position of being their guests and treat them with studious politeness at all time.

4. Remember that things which seem natural to us because they are British, may, unknown to us, shock and even wound the Icelander; we are used to treating each other in a very off handed way. Foreigners are very much more polite to one another, therefore let us try to be much more polite to them than we would be to one another.

5. Treat the womenfolk as you would like your own wives or sister to be treated. Give them a helping hand if you see them doing a heavy bit of work. Make friends with the children.

6. Guard against boredom: there may be spells of inactivity when you may be inclined to grouse about things and get down on your luck. Try and keep yourself employed by familiarising yourself with the weapons at your deposal, no matter what branch of the service you may belong to.

7. Don't stay in a rut. When you have got fully conversant with one job try and learn something ells. Pay particular attention to dress and discipline, it all makes for efficiency. You may not be in the Guards but there is no reason why you should not emulate their smartness and their efficiency.

8. Don't spread or listen to rumours. There will be enemy agents whose job it is to spread uneasiness by clever propaganda; they have been most successful in some places, so let us see that this is not the case in Iceland. Another point : although we want to be friendly with the civil population, let us be particularly careful about giving away any military information of any sort: it may seem trivial to you, but pieced together by a skilled agent it may be of great value to the enemy.

9. Many Icelanders speak English but very few English people speak Icelandic. There is no surer way to the heart of a people than to learn their language and to teach them yours and it will help to while away the time and encourage friendship.

10. Remember that articles which you may consider to be trifles of little or no value, may be of value to their owners. Never take things, even for fire wood, without the owner's permission: 'scrounging' may be understood in the army but it is most unpopular with foreigners.

-- end --

Bibliography

Unpublished Primary Sources

The National Archives of the United Kingdom

ADM 199/699, minute by Waldash, 4 June 1940.

_____, Howard-Smith to Collier, 19 June 1940.

_____, Collier to Howard-Smith, 28 June 1940.

ADM 202/50, War Diary entry, 1 April 1940.

_____, War Diary entry, 3 May 1940.

_____, War Diary entries, 7-20 May 1940.

_____, 'Operation Order No. 2', 12 May 1940.

_____, unidentified individual to unidentified individual, 19 May 1940.

ADM 202/400, 'Letter of Proceedings', 27 May 1940.

_____, report on the proceedings of HMS Berwick, HMS Glasgow, HMS Fearless, and HMS Fortune throughout 7-11 May 1940, 7 May 1940.

_____, anonymous to Colonel Sturges, p. 1. This four page document is not easily identifiable. It begins with a paragraph explaining why Colonel Sturges received these instructions and then proceeds to detail all sixteen one after another. Page one displays the partially smudged words *most secret*, pages two to four do not. No date is issued.

AIR 40/1375, Bowering to anonymous, 14 April 1940.

_____, Bowering to anonymous, 15 April 1940.

_____, Howard-Smith to anonymous, 23 May 1940.

_____, Howard-Smith to anonymous, 24 May 1940.

CAB 80/12, ‘Iceland: Note by Joint Planning Sub-Committee submitting a Draft Report’, 30 May 1940.

_____, ‘Iceland: Report’, 31 May 1940.

_____, ‘Iceland: Strength of Garrison’, 11 June 1940.

FO 115/3722, Lothian to Hull, 10 May 1940.

FO 371/18262, Little to Hume, 8 May 1934.

FO 371/18262, minute by an unidentified individual, 27 June 1934, p. 2.

FO 371/19429, ‘Denmark and Iceland: Annual Report, 1934’, 19 January 1935.

FO 371/21075, summary of Höyer to Bassett, 8 February 1937.

_____, minute by Collier, 22 February 1937.

_____, minute by Falla, 22 February 1937.

_____, ‘Memorandum’. This four page document is not easily identifiable. It begins with a brief description of Höyer and then proceeds to analyse Höyer’s letter to Bassett. Page one displays the word *confidential*, pages two to four do not. No date is issued.

FO 371/23637, ‘Denmark and Iceland: Annual Report, 1938’, 4 February 1939.

_____, ‘Parliamentary Resolution’.

FO 371/23638, unidentified individual to Collier, 30 August 1939.

FO 371/23640, ‘Report on Visit to Iceland’.

FO 371/24778, anonymous to Bowering, 9 April 1940.

_____, Howe to anonymous, 11 April 1940.

_____, Philips to Butler, 29 April 1940.

FO 371/24779, minute by Howard-Smith, 2 May 1940.

_____, anonymous to Shepherd, 9 May 1940.

_____, Howard-Smith to anonymous, 10 May 1940.

_____, ‘Prime Minister’s Broadcast to Nation, 8.30 p.m., 10 May 1940’.

FO 371/24779, Howard-Smith to Stefánsson, 16 May 1940.

_____, Howard-Smith to Halifax, 29 May 1940.

_____, Howard-Smith to Halifax, 16 June 1940.

_____, Howard-Smith to Halifax, 27 June 1940.

_____, Jónsson to Unwin, 20 August 1940.

_____, 'Summary of an Article which Appeared in "Þjóðviljinn" of the 5 September 1940'.

_____, 'Translation from Þjóðviljinn', 17 September 1940.

_____, untitled memorandum. This four page document is easily identifiable. It is marked on the first three pages by the heading 'Travellers' Club, Pall Mall, S.W.1.' No date is issued. The anonymous person is thought to be Howard-Smith.

FO 371/24790, minute by Collier, 5 November 1940.

FO 371/29297, 'Information about the Strike'.

FO 371/29311, Howard-Smith to Eden, 10 February 1940.

FO 371/32749, Curtis to Howard-Smith, 20 April, 1942.

_____, Howard-Smith to Eden, 21 April 1942.

FO 371/32750, Howard-Smith to Eden, 22 June 1942.

_____, minute by an unidentified individual, 30 July 1942.

FO 371/32767, 'Annual Report on Iceland for the Year 1941', 16 March 1942.

FO 371/36784, 'Annual Report on Iceland for the Year 1942', 19 January 1943.

WO 106/3034, 'Alabaster: Plan and First Maintenance Project', 11 May 1940.

WO 106/3035, Curtis to anonymous, 28 April 1941.

_____, Curtis to anonymous, 28 May 1941.

WO 106/3040, Primrose to Curtis, 19 August 1940.

WO 106/3042, Davis to Conyers-Baker, 5 March 1941.

WO 106/3043, 'Instructions to Major General Curtis, Officer Commanding Troops, Iceland'.

WO 176/287, War Diary entry, 17 May 1940.

_____, War Diary entry, 31 May 1940.

_____, ‘Ten Commandments for British Troops in Iceland’, 16 May 1940.

_____, ‘Alabaster Force Operation Order No. 2’, 1 July 1940.

_____, ‘Confidential Memorandum No. 1’, 9 July 1940.

_____, ‘Alabaster Force Intelligence Summery No. 11’, 14 August 1940.

_____, ‘Alabaster Force Intelligence Summery No. 18’, 2 September 1940.

WO 176/288, War Diary entry, 21 May 1941.

_____, ‘Iceland Force Intelligence Summery No. 60’, 13 June 1941.

WO 176/289, ‘Iceland (C) Force Intelligence Summary No. 85’, 7 December 1941.

WO 176/290, anonymous to all British soldiers in Iceland, 22 April 1942.

WO 193/759, Lammie to anonymous, 23 May 1940

The Royal Marines Museum Archive

ARCH 7/19/18, War Diary entry, 13 May 1940.

_____, War Diary memo, 9 May 1940.

_____, ‘Notes for a lecture given by Colonel F. P. Pym to the officers of Stonehouse Barracks after the War, but taken from notes prepared for a lecture by Major General A. N. Williams, C. B. E., RM’.

Published Primary Sources

Books

Bratby, M. and Watkins, E., eds., *Iceland Presents: An Assembly of Articles and Stories* (Reykjavík: Snæbjörn Jónsson, c. 1941).

von Clausewitz, C., *On War* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1997).

Coggin, P. A, *The British Occupation of Iceland* (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2009).

Danchev, A. and Todman, D., eds., *War Diaries, 1939-1945: Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke* (London: Phoenix Press, 2002).

Dilks, D., ed., *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938-1945* (London: Cassell and Co., 1971).

Flournoy, R. W. and Hudson, M. O., eds., *A Collection of Nationality Laws of Various Countries: As Contained in Constitutions, Statutes, and Treaties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1929).

Martienssen, A., ed., *Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs, 1939-1945* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2005).

Linklater, E., *The Northern Garrisons* (London: HMSO, 1941).

Newspaper, Magazine, and Journal Articles

Eliot, G. F., 'If an Allied Defeat, What?', *Life*, 8 (1940), 28-29.

Mead, W. R., 'Renaissance of Iceland', *Economic Geography*, 21 (1945), 135-144.

Roberts, L., 'They Never Had Seen a Soldier', *The Saturday Evening Post*, 213 (1940), 20, 87, 89-90, and 92.

Published Secondary Sources

Books

Bilder, M. C., and Bilder, J. C., *A Foot Soldier for Patton: The Story of a 'Red Diamond' Infantryman with the US Third Army* (Drexel: Casemate, 2008).

Bittner, D. F., *The Lion and the White Falcon: Britain an Iceland in the World War II Era* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1983).

Chamberlin, W. C., *Economic Development of Iceland through World War II* (New York: AMS Press, 1968).

Churchill, W. S., *The Second World War* (London: Pimlico, 2002).

Doyle, P., *The British Soldier of the Second World War* (Botley: Shire Publications, 2009).

Finnegan, J. P., *Military Intelligence* (Washington: US Army Centre of Military History, 1998).

Gröndal, B., *Iceland: From Neutrality to NATO Membership* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1971).

Hálfdanarson, G., *Historical Dictionary of Iceland* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2008).

Herwig, H. H., *Politics of Frustration: The United States in German Naval Planning, 1889-1941* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1976).

Howard, M., *The First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Jordan, R., *The World's Merchant Fleets, 1939: The Particulars and Wartime Fates of 6,000 Ships* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2006).

Karlsson, G., *Iceland's 1100 Years: The History of a Marginal Society* (London: Hurst and Co., 2000).

Lockhart, R. B., *The Marines Were There: The Story of the Royal Marines in the Second World War* (London: Putnam, 1950).

Macnaghten, A., *Vigil in Iceland: A Fragment of Autobiography, 1940-1942* (Slough: Chas Luff, 1977).

Miller, J., *The North Atlantic Front: Orkney, Shetland, Faroe, and Iceland at War* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2003).

O'Dell, A. C., *The Scandinavian World* (London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1957).

Quarrie, B., *German Airborne Divisions: Blitzkrieg, 1940-1941* (Botley: Osprey Publishing, 2004).

Rissik, D., *The DLI at War: The History of the Durham Light Infantry, 1939-1945* (Brancepeth: The Durham Light Infantry, c. 1954).

Roskill, S. W., *The War at Sea, 1939-1945: The Defensive* (London: HMSO, 1976).

Short, W. R., *Icelanders in the Viking Age: The People of the Sagas* (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 2010).

Steinhilper, U. and Osborne, P., *Spitfire on My Tail: A View from the Other Side* (Keston: Independent Books, 1990).

Stenius, H., Österberg, M. and Östling, J., eds., *Nordic Narratives of the Second World War: National Historiographies Revisited* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2011).

Stone, D., *Hitler's Army: The Men, Machines, and Organization, 1939-1945* (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2009).

Storey, N. R., *The Home Guard* (Botley: Shire Publications, 2009).

Thomas, A. H., *Historical Dictionary of Denmark* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009).

Weinberg, G. L., *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Whitehead, Þ., *Ísland í hers höndum* (Reykjavík: Vaka-Helgafell, 2002).

Newspaper, Magazine, and Journal Articles

Bittner, D. F., 'A Final Appraisal of the British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-1942', *The RUSI Journal*, 120 (1975), 45-53.

Hardarson, S. B. J., 'The "Republic of Iceland" 1940-1944: Anglo-American Attitudes and Influences', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 9 (1974), 27-56.

Thorarinsson, S., 'Population Changes in Iceland', *Geographical Review*, 51 (1961), 519-533.

Websites

Anonymous, ed./eds., *WW2 People's War: An Archive of World War Two Memories* (London: BBC Future Media, 2006) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/> [23rd July 2012].

Goldman, L., ed., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) <http://www.oxforddnb.com> [17th June 2012].

Unpublished Secondary Sources

Dissertations and Theses

Bittner, D. F., 'The British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-1942' (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Missouri, 1974).

Mee, R. C., 'The Foreign Policy of the Chamberlin Wartime Administration, September 1939-May 1940' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1998).

Correspondence

Bushaway, B., to Deans, P. (unpublished correspondence, 6th August 2012).